DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

A New Promised Land? Denominations, Local Congregations, Camp Meetings, and the Creation of Community in Early Kentucky, c.1780-1830

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Jonathan Peter De Vries

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Acknowledgments

Throughout this thesis project I have been reminded of the old saying that it takes a village to raise a child. So to, I have found, does a project such as this Ph.D. thesis. There are an incredible number of individuals and institutions that have offered me advice, guidance, and encouragement throughout this entire project that I would like to both acknowledgment and thank. Without these individuals and institutions this thesis that follows would not exist. Their help and encouragement has been invaluable throughout.

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Author Declaration

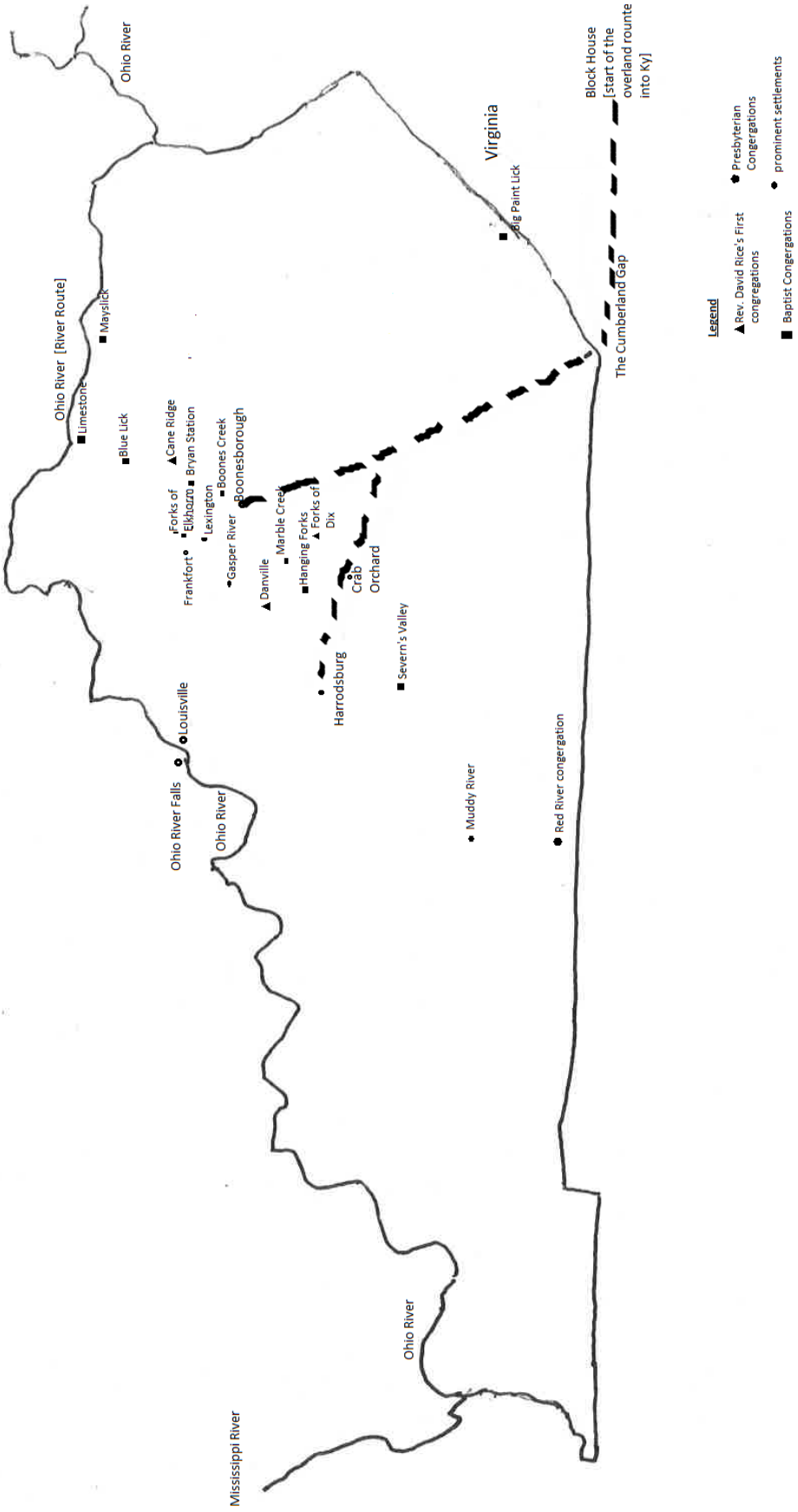
I, Jonathan Peter De Vries, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me; that the work of this thesis is a record which has been done by me, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

This thesis examines the importance Kentucky's religious denominations played in the development and transformation of early Kentucky (1770's to 1830). This thesis will show that though federal and regional governments may have created the laws that established newly opened territories, it was often the denominations that played an important role in the creation of that community and stability of the wider societies. Beginning with camp meetings this thesis will argue that denominations began the process of creating community by actively placing these meetings outside the bounds of early congregations and into the backcountry. In doing so denominations brought outsiders, in many cases for the first time, into direct contact with the denominations. This thesis will also argue that denominations developed a new form of worship that was more inclusive and more communal, allowing for wider participation by settlers, especially by women, children, or slaves at these meetings. This thesis will then turn its attention towards the ideas and concepts of the local congregation. This thesis will argue that the local congregation was ideally situated to reinforce the beginnings of community which were established with camp meetings. Through activities such as the calling of ministers as well as the election of elders, deacons, and other lay positions in their local congregation, settlers became active members of the local congregation and entered into a deeper connection with the community. The local congregation offered settlers access to an institution that was both local and communal. Finally this thesis will turn towards a study of physical church buildings arguing that such buildings expressed and reinforced concepts of community and stability. This thesis will argue that over time those congregations that had access to a church often found stability and security. This thesis will also focus on the layout of churches arguing that denominations strengthened already established and shared ideas of community within their congregations through these layouts. By understanding how denominations created community within Kentucky this thesis will argue that the denominations played an important role within newly established territories and that only through a study of these denominations can one begin to understand how the process of western expansion was able to succeed.


Ohio River
Virginia
Block House
[start of the
overland rounte
into Ky]
Ohio River [River Route]
Limestone
Maysliick
Big Paint Lick
The Cumberland Gap
Blue Lick
Cane Ridge
Bryan Station
Forks of
Elkhorn
Lexington
Boones Creek
Boonesborough
Frankfort
Gasper River
Marble Creek
Danville
Hanging Forks
Forks of
Dix
Crab
Orchard
Harrodsburg
Severn's Valley
Louisville
Ohio River Falls
Ohio River
Muddy River
Red River congergation
Ohio River
Mississippi River
Legend
Rev. David Rice's First congregations
Presbyterian Congregations
prominent settlements
Baptist Congergations

Map 1

Introduction:

On a Spring day in May 1775, under the outstretched arms of an elm tree, a few yards from the yet completed fort of Boonesboro, the Reverend John Lythe, an Anglican priest from Virginia, conducted the first recorded Christian religious service in Kentucky.[1] This first congregation was, in the words of one eyewitness, and future judge, Richard Henderson, 'a set of scoundrels who scarcely believed in God or feared the devil.'[2] Henderson's commentary suggests much. Taken at face value, Henderson's words seem to be a fairly accurate, if unflattering, description of many of Kentucky's first settlers. Many of these early settlers were the prototypical frontiersmen with recognizable family surnames such as Boone, Logan and Shelby. These were worldly men who often focused more on the here and now, rather than on the afterlife, or the state of their souls. The service itself, though, was more important than those who attended. That first service held by the Rev. Lythe at Boonesboro encapsulated the importance that the denominations would play within Kentucky from the beginning. The construction of Boonesboro had yet to be completed, yet those who were present felt a need for some form of religious service to occur. The question of why a group of settler's that Henderson referred to as 'a set of scoundrels' needed a religious service at all, and what these settlers, and the ones who would follow, gained from religious observance is one of the questions at the heart of this thesis. The answer to that question forms the central argument of this work.

Denominations became an integral part of the creation of Kentucky providing, for many settlers, a form of community, society, and identity that was often lacking in the society of the early backcountry, as settlement expanded across the Appalachians and into the upper Ohio Valley. What Henderson's scoundrels were seeking was nothing less than community and belonging. The very concept of community for Henderson's scoundrels, and for the settlers that followed was an important and complex one. Such groups often understood community as the imposition of order, structure, and stability

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[1] Richard Henderson, '*Journal of Trip to Boonesborough,*' Draper Manuscript Collection DM1CC21 - 105 (here after DM) Lyman Copeland Draper and State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Kentucky papers*, The Draper Manuscript ([Madison, Wis.]: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey [distributor]).

[2] Richard Henderson, '*Journal of Trip to Boonesborough,*' DM1CC21-10.

onto the world.[3] Such a concept became ever more important as the frontier of North America opened up and settlers moved further and further west. Community became what separated settlers from the wilderness that existed, often, just outside their front door. That concept of community though was also fluid, being dependent upon the context in which it was used.[4] Within this thesis, community has been defined as a collection of individuals who had a common or shared bond; be it a shared history, a shared custom, or shared morality. In other words, community was that which offers a collection of individuals a common or shared identity and that united them.[5] Community, as understood by this thesis, often though not always, was formed through association within local congregations. Henderson's scoundrels for example, were for a short time a community, for they shared both a history, through their travel through the wilderness, and a shared idea of the promise that Kentucky held. Like many settlers that would follow, Henderson's scoundrels sought and initially found a sense of community in the only denomination present at that time, the Anglican denomination. These men may have been the first to begin the colonization process but their actions and desire for community were not unique, nor was the role that the Anglican denomination engaged in. These men along with the Anglican/Episcopalian denomination would set the pattern that the settlers who came after would follow. As new settlers and denominations arrived they too would take on the roles set out by Henderson's scoundrels.

The desire for community and belonging that Henderson's men sought and found

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[3]Beeman, 'The New Social History and the Search for "Community" in Colonial America', *American Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1977): 422–43; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan*, Reprint edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 52–53, 60–61;Rachel N. Klein, 'Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1981): 661–80.

[4] Beenman in particular argues that the fluid nature of community has made it hard for historians to pinpoint an exact definition of community. Often Beenman states historians intuitively understand what community is when they see it but defining it is often much more difficult. Richard R. Beeman, 'The New Social History and the Search for "Community" in Colonial America', *American Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1977): 422–43.

[5] Stephen Mennell, *The American Civilizing Process*, 1 edition (Polity, 2007),6 ; Beeman, 'The New Social History and the Search for "Community" in Colonial America', *American Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1977): 422–43; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 52–53, 60–61,122-123,212-220; Darrett B. Rutman, 'Assessing the Little Communities of Early America', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1986): 164–78; Rachel N. Klein, 'Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1981): 661–80; Darrett B. Rutman, *Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984); Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808*, 1 edition (University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 47–50, 270–73.

within the Anglican denomination, may at first be surprising to many. The popular image of the backcountry that has been passed down through the years is that of the stereotypical long hunter or the independent woodsman who spent much of his life choosing to live outside society or the law. Such imagery has been informed by authors and movies alike including James Fennimore Cooper, John Wayne, and Clint Eastwood. Fennimore Cooper, in particular, had a significant impact on our collective perception of the prototypical frontiersman. Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and its protagonist Natty Bumppo, published between 1827 and 1841, can be seen as the starting point for many later artistic depictions of the backcountry.[6] Bumppo was seen as a fearless warrior of Anglo-American descent raised by Native Americans who chose to dress like his adopted family and was proficient with the long rifle. For generations of schoolchildren who grew up after 1950, the most common image of the frontiersman, that comes to mind are those portrayed by the actor Fess Parker. Parker portrayed both Davy Crockett with his coonskin cap and Kentucky long-rifle in the Disney television show between 1954-1955, and later, Daniel Boone in the 20th Century Fox series of the same name between 1964 – 1970.[7] Parker's and Cooper's portrayals may be the most commonly 'recalled' images of the backcountry individual for many people. These depictions though have little in common with the historical reality. The closest reality to these depictions may have been Henderson's own scoundrels, yet even here reality quickly diverged. Among Henderson's group were an Anglican minister, John Lythe, as well as a Baptist minister, Squire Boone. Indeed, Squire Boone may be a more fitting image of the backcountry individual than either Parker's Crockett or Cooper's Natty Bumppo. Squire Boone was an established long-hunter and explorer travelling frequently with his brother Daniel throughout Kentucky during the 1760's. Boone was comfortable both within the woodlands of backcountry and the pulpit of his local congregation. Indeed, Squire Boone is a fitting image for the backcountry individual; though he was a skilled explorer he was also a minister, suggesting the importance that religion played in such a world. That Squire Boone was able to be both minister and explorer and found little difficulty in relating the two is important. That relationships between religion and society has till recently been overlooked by historians. Robert Middlekauff's work *The*

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[6] James Fenimore Cooper, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Leatherstocking Tales I; The Pioneers, The Last of the Mohicans, The Prairie*, ed. Blake Nevins (New York, N.Y: Library of America, 1985).

[7] *Daniel Boone - Season 1* (Liberation Entertainment, 2007).

Glorious Cause, and Sydney E Ahlstrom's, *A Religious History of the American People* are useful examples.[8] Middlekauff's work, first published in 1982 and republished in 2005 as the first volume of the ambitious *Oxford History of the United States* series, says little on religion; spending only a handful of pages on the subject.[9] Middlekauff instead focuses his work on the secular realm covering political, economic, and social developments and relationship in the years between the late colonial and revolutionary periods. What little Middlekauff does write on the subject is little more than a historical narrative of the development of particular denominations and little else. Indeed, one of the most important and significant events in both religion and society during the colonial period, the Great Awakening, is only discussed in passing and only as a side note.[10] Until recently, historians of religion have followed similar patterns. Ahlstrom's, *A Religious History of the American People,* for example, first published in 1972, and later revised and updated in 2004, covers the establishment, development, and history of America's religious denominations in extensive detail. Ahlstrom goes into such depth as to cover many of the theological arguments that came out of American denominations from the start. Yet like Middlekauff, Ahlstrom's work is insular and often ignores how those theological arguments and the wider denominations impacted the society around them. Nor was Ahlstrom alone in this approach. Until recently, much of the work within religious history has been in the same vein, from Perry Miller's, *A New England Mind* to Robert Handy's, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada,* or T. Scott Miyakawa's, *Protestants and Pioneers.*[11] Each of these works, and others that followed, narrowly focused their studies of America's religious development to such a point as to often exclude the denominational impact upon wider civil and social society. Miller's, *A New England Mind,* for example, whilst extensively researched and well written, is at its heart a study of Congregationalist theology with little relation or

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[8] Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004).

[9] Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 46–52, 216–218.

[10] Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause,* 47–52.

[11] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2014); Robert T Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago U.P, n.d.).

explanation of its relation to the wider New England world of the period.[12]

In recent decades there has been an important shift in the field. Starting with studies by historians such as Paul E Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium,* and Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* historians have begun to revise American religious historiography by placing religion and its denominations into the context of the wider society.[13] Johnson's, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, was one of the first to begin this transformation. Within *A Shopkeeper's Millennium,* Johnson examined the relationship between Christianity and the wider community in Rochester New York during the Second Great Awakening. In doing so, Johnson studied the relationship between, as well, as within religious observance and politics and economics, arguing that religiosity played an important role within the community. To that end Johnson argued in his study of Rochester that there was a direct relationship between politics within the city and religious observance.[14] With similar patterns found within Rochester's wider merchant community.[15] Within the realm of politics Johnson demonstrated that a significant proportion of Rochester's political elite were members of one of two congregations within the city. The Episcopalian congregation of St. Luke's and the First Presbyterian Church.[16] Importantly Johnson found though of Rochester's political elite who did not belong to either St. Luke's or the First Presbyterian Church every one of those individuals did belong to at least one congregation within the city.[17] He argued that membership to a congregation was an important first step for any who sought public office. What his work suggests is that even within more settled areas, such as Up-State New York in the mid 1830's denominations played an import role in creating and maintaining community. Rochester was not backcountry territory of Kentucky County yet even here denominations had an important role to play. Johnson did not end his study with a study of Rochester's political elite if he had such a work would have still

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[12] Miller, *The New England Mind*.

[13] Paul E. Johnson*, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004); Patricia U Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Jon Butler, *New World Faiths Religion in Colonial Americ*a (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[14] Johnson. A Shopkeepers Millennium. 90-91, 128-129.

[15] Johnson. *A Shopkeepers Millennium.* 90-91, 128-129.

[16] Johnson. *A Shopkeepers Millennium.* 90-91.

[17] Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium.* 128-129

been invaluable. Johnson though also examined the relationship between the denominations and Rochester's merchant community. Here too Johnson found significant proportions of the merchant and upper-class, like that of the political elite, holding membership in congregations throughout the city.[18] Johnson argued that, as with Rochester's political elite, its merchant community found value in belonging to one of the city's many congregations. Membership within a community would have been invaluable to merchants. Membership to a congregation was a way of demonstrating their ties to the local community. Johnson's study suggests that there was a important link between denominations and community, even in more settled areas such as up-state New York. In short those individuals, Johnson argued, that were active members of a congregation were also important members of both Rochester's economic community and civil community.[19]

Patricia Bonomi made similar arguments in her study *Under the Cope of Heaven*. Bonomi argued that religion played a very real and important role within colonial society and within the lives of settlers.[20] Specifically Bonomi found denominations were often a 'source of...cohesion' for those who immigrated to Pennsylvania's backcountry.[21] Denominations became focal points of community for such settlers so much so that within colonies where religious pluralism existed, nearly 60% of the population attended church services on a regular basis.[22] In turn that regular attendance had an important impact on the nature of colonial society, in particular on relationships within the political life of each colony. Bonomi posited 'religion and politics were perhaps more intertwined" than any of Britain's other North American colonial holdings.'[23] So much so that, though the Quakers were the first to engage in 'denominational politics', by the end of the colonial period 'virtually all the denominations of Pennsylvania' became politically active, with the most effective and powerful that could rival the Quakers being the Presbyterian and German Reformed

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[18] Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium*,. 34.

[19] Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 32-36.

[20] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 217-223.

[21] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 135.

[22] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 220.

[23] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*,168.

churches.[24] Bonomi puts forward the importance of religion through the revivals of the First Great Awakening had on the development throughout the Revolutionary period. Specifically arguing that it was through the revivals that colonists found avenues for leadership and participation by many who till that point had little connection to the political life of their home colony.[25]

Johnson's and Bonomi's works have had an important impact within the field of religious history. In the following years, other historians would follow their patterns and arguments examining the importance that religion played within society. Historians such as John K Nelson in *A Blessed Company,* Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia,* Sally Schwartz *'A Mixed Multitude',* or John M Barry in *The Creation of the American Soul* would undertake studies of how established colonial denominations interacted with the wider colonial society.[26] John K Nelson and Rhys Isaac's works focused importantly on Kentucky's parent state of Virginia. Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia,* focused on two denominations in particular the older and larger established Anglican Church and the later rise of the Baptist denomination. Isaac argued that the Anglican denomination played an important role in the creation of community within Virginia with the parish church in particular playing an important role in that creation. Isaac argued that within Virginia churches were 'dispersed at the most frequent intervals in the countryside...often st[anding] alone in a cleared area near some crossroads at the centre of its parish precinct.' Within the Anglican dominated colony of Virginia he argues churches became a centre of community. Their location at crossroads and in cleared areas near the centre of their parishes made both the physical structure of the church, and the religious services they provided, important. Virginia did not establish any large centres of population; instead the countryside was dotted with large plantations, with church services and vestry providing both to the spiritual and social needs, from poor relief to a sense of belonging, for the dispersed population. Isaac went on to argue that the rise of the Separate Baptist denomination in Virginia in the 1760's

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[24] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 181.

[25] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 161.

[26] John K Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); John M. Barry, *The Creation of the American Soul* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2012).

and 70's did little to change this.[27] The Baptist denomination may have brought a counter cultural approach to Virginia's existing communities bringing a sense of equality of individuals to Virginia's gentry society, yet the importance of the denominations did not change.[28] Indeed Isaac argued that the only significant change was what denomination an individual belonged to, not the importance the denominations held or their role in society.[29]

John K Nelson's study developed upon many of the ideas found in Isaac and offers a more focused study of the Anglican denomination and its interaction with civil society. Nelson argued that within Virginia the Anglican denomination and the state, in the form of the county government, worked hand in hand to provide for the needs of settlers. The local congregation along with the civil county government worked hand in hand to establish and reinforce ideas of community. Each institution was a logical extension of the other. Others such as S. Scott Rohr's work *Hope's Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* on the Moravians in the southern backcountry examined the importance of individual denominations within wider communities.[30] Rohr's study focused on English-speaking settlers within the larger German-speaking Moravian denomination. What he found was that when individuals belonged to a small population, settlers often turned towards denominations to find support and identity. Each of these works places the study of the denominations within the wider community and societies that existed, drawing important links on how the denominations shaped and were shaped by their surroundings.

The historiography of Kentucky has followed many of the similar patterns found within the wider field. In particular, the various roles that religion played and the centrality of religious observance to the life of many early settlers has been overlooked by many of the monographs written on Kentucky's creation and development. The historiography of Kentucky can be placed into two broad categories. First, works focused on the development of Kentucky itself including works such as Craig

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[27]Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 58, 168.

[28] Isaac. *The Transformation of Virginia.* 164-165

[29] Isaac. *The Transformation of Virginia.* 175.

[30]S. Scott Rohrer, *Hope's Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

Thompson Friend's 2010 *Kentucke's Frontiers* or Thomas D. Clark's earlier *A History of Kentucky.*[31] Such works offer grounding in the nature of Kentucky's development and its place within the wider American experience. Secondly, there are works focused on Kentucky's denominations and its religious development. Within this group are works such as John Boles' *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* or Paul F Conkin's, *Cane Ridge* that offer arguments for the importance that denominations played within Kentucky or the influence that particular events, such as camp meetings, had.[32] Whilst such works as these are useful when placed within the wider context of Kentucky's development they are often limited in the scope of their study focusing on individual denominations or on singular events such as Conkin's work on Cane Ridge. In doing so these works often ignore the importance denominations collectively had on the wider region. Finally, in order to properly understand and place Kentucky's development it will be necessary to look to works that are more broadly written on American religion and development such as John K Nelson's, *A Blessed Company,* or Scott Rohrer's, *Hopes Promise*.[33] Though such works are often outside the scope of both Kentucky and the period covered by this thesis they are still of great importance. Such works offer a chance to position Kentucky's denominations within the wider events of each denomination at regional and national levels. These works also offer a chance to draw useful comparisons and examples from across the United States that might not be possible if one is focused solely on the events within Kentucky.

The proper place to begin is with those monographs that focus broadly on Kentucky's development and wider placement within the young republic at its founding. One of the most influential works, in this group of writing, was that of study by Thomas D Clark in *A History of Kentucky.*[34] Clark's work is a useful beginning point for any

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[31]Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Thomas Dionysius Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (Ashland, KY: J. Stuart Foundation, 1992).

[32] John B Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Paul Keith Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

[33] John K Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); S. Scott Rohrer, *Hope's Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Jon Butler, *New World Faiths Religion in Colonial America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); John M. Barry, *The Creation of the American Soul* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2012).

[34] Clark, *A History of Kentucky* .

study of Kentucky. *A History of Kentucky* can be regarded as a keystone text on the history and development of the state. The work has been in both constant use and revision since its first publication in the 1930's. It is wide ranging, covering both the geography of the territory and its development in diverse areas varying from political to educational, from agricultural to social and cultural developments and encompasses a broad period from the late eighteenth to the mid twentieth century. Clark tries to show the importance Kentucky played in the young republic, for it was there, after the Revolutionary War, that the nation began its first experiment in colonization. The broad scope of the work though is its major weakness. Whilst Clark covers many of the important and significant events in the state's history, in doing so he is often only able to begin the conversation of the importance that such events had. While Clark's work is often seen as authoritative, it remains fundamentally a survey of Kentucky history and for more detail and analysis of events one must inevitably turn to other works. Yet the importance of this work is not what it covered but its use as a starting point and inspiration for those that have come after. Craig Thompson Friend, Steven Aron, and Elizabeth Perkins for example, each take on Clark's central argument and expand on it in their own work.

Craig Thompson Friend's two works *Along the Maysville Road*, and *Kentucke's Frontiers* are a useful place to begin a more focused study of Kentucky's historiography.[35] Friend's first work, *Along the Maysville Road*, narrowed the scope of the work to the events that occurred over the sixty-five mile length of the Maysville road between the 1770's and 1830's. This allowed Friend to focus on the social and cultural development of Kentucky, placing both the state and those developments within the wider scope of the early republic.[36] While *Along the Maysville Road* begins with a study of the first generation of settlers the work is centred more specifically on the political and economic development as well as the transformation of Kentucky's landscape during the period. To that end Friend focuses on the interactions between the various groups who arrived in Kentucky from Virginia's landowning elite and merchants to small ethnic groups and slaves. Friend concludes that of all the groups who arrived in Kentucky during these years it was ultimately the middle class merchants who

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[35] Craig Thompson Friend, *Along the Maysville Road: The Early American Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West* (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers.*

[36] Friend, *Along the Maysville Road*, 4.

succeeded in defining Kentucky. Friend built upon this study with his second monograph *Kentucke's Frontiers*.

Friend's arguments in *Kentucke's Frontiers,* that Kentucky can be of use in understanding the broader development of not just the state itself but also the wider nation.[37] Central to the argument of the work is Friend's concept of frontiers. Friend argues that Kentucky experienced multiple frontiers each of a slightly different nature as it developed over time. With each frontier came new challenges and new ways of conceptualizing ideas of community and identity. At its heart, Friend's study is a work on the creation of the disparate, 'uncertain and fragile societies' that developed within the territory.[38] In this Friend is correct in stressing that Kentucky was the first experiment in colonizing the interior of continental North America in which the young republic engaged. The lessons learned would be carried West as new land was opened up in quick succession and resulted in a dozen states being added to the Union in the decades before the Civil War. Yet Friend like others, such as Stephen Aron or Elizabeth Perkins, frequently overlooks the importance that the various religious denominations played in this creation.[39] Friend has two chapters covering what he calls the 'peopling of Kentucky' and 'Seeking Security and Stability' in which he covers the founding and creation of the territory. Yet within these pages there is little reference to the work and impact the different religious denominations had on creating communities. Indeed, Friend's only mention of any denomination comes as a reference from the Rev. David Rice, the father of Kentucky's Presbyterianism, and then it is only limited to Rice's commentary on the litigious nature of Kentucky during the period.[40]

Stephen Aron's work *How the West was Lost,* though more expansive in its approach to Kentucky's religious development, adds little more. Aron approaches Kentucky through a study of the state's political and economic development between the 1770's and the 1820's. In undertaking this study, Aron employs the lives of two of the territory's most famous inhabitants; Daniel Boone and Henry Clay, as bookends of this

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[37] Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers*, xix-xxx.

[38] Friend, *Kentucke's Frontie*rs, xii.

[39] Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996). Elizabeth A Perkins, *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[40] Friend, *Kentucke's Frontie*rs, 114.

transition. The work's central argument focuses on the transformation of Kentucky from the 'Good poor man's country' of Boone to that of the mercantile and political world of Clay.[41] In doing so, Aron argues that Kentucky was ultimately shaped far more by mercantile and industrial minded individuals and not by the independent small landowners of Boone's world. In some ways like Friend's work, throughout this study Aron focuses on the development of Kentucky's communities. However, while much focus is placed on the development of communities in Kentucky, what is again missing from Aron's study is a detailed examination of the role denominations played in this creation. Although, *How the West was Lost* does provide a very generalized discussion of many of Kentucky's denominations, Aron's study does so only within the specific context of the revivals and the Second Great Awakening.[42] This is of little surprise when one considers those works that have focused on religion and the denominations during this period. Works by Ellen Eslinger, John B. Boles, or Paul K. Conkin each limit their discussions of Kentucky's religious history to events between 1800 and 1803 with little exception.[43] The title of John Boles' *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky*, for example, suggests that the book is a study of those denominations active in the territory prior to the Civil War.[44] Yet much of the work is focused on a narrowly defined discussion of the revivals and camp meetings and their impact on Kentucky in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Only the first two chapters of Boles' work cover the development of religious beliefs in early Kentucky and yet even here Boles writes little more than a narrative of key events.

Eslinger's, *Citizens of Zion* and Paul Conkin's, *Cane Ridge* are even more tightly focused on Kentucky's revivals. Only Eslinger takes any time to discuss such events in the context of the wider Kentucky environment.[45] However, Eslinger covers the nature of Kentucky's early society and communities only in order to place in proper historical context the later development of camp meetings. Here too the important role the denominations played in this development is overlooked. To find studies of this

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[41] Aron, *How the West Was Lost*, 1, 192.

[42] Aron, *How the West was Lost*, 170-191.

[43] Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky*; Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* .

[44] Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky*.

[45] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 162-180.

relationship one must look outside the historiography of Kentucky to works such as John K. Nelson's *A Blessed Company*.[46] Nelson's work examines important aspects of the relationship between church and state within Virginia. Nelson argues that scholars must re-evaluate the concept of the county. He argues that the church and civil administrations were so closely tied that scholars should think in terms of what he calls the 'parish-county' as the most basic unit of governance.[47] It was at this level and through this relationship between church and state that society properly functioned. Both institutions worked side by side to provide needed systems of governance and support to settlers. Neither was such a relationship between church and state confined to colonies that had established denominations such as the Anglican Church in Virginia. Sally Schwartz argued similar patterns could be, and often were, found in religiously heterogeneous colonises such as Pennsylvania.[48]

Schwartz argued in her study '*A mixed multitude*' religious denominations played a very real and important role in creation of community within Pennsylvania's backcountry counties.[49] Focusing her study on counties such as Lancaster Pennsylvania in their first few decades of settlement Schwartz's found a pattern of settlement that saw settlers often choose to settle on small family farms over large towns or villages.[50] The result of such settlement patterns, Schwartz found, was a backcountry population that often felt isolated and alone. Such patterns of settlement resulted in few opportunities for settlers to regularly gather and impacted on the creation of community. Indeed Schwartz argued that the denominations were the only real institution to offer settlers a link to the surrounding areas and the wider world.

Where Schwartz's arguments break from what developed in Kentucky during its first few years was the historic and cultural links settlers had to specific denominations. Schwartz argued that within Pennsylvanian the large influx of ethnic minorities often

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[46] Nelson, *A Blessed Company*.

[47] Nelson, *A Blessed Company,* 13.

[48] Sally Schwartz, *'A Mixed Multitude': The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Schwartz's study of Pennsylvania's backcountry has significant similarities to that of Kentucky, and her analysis and arguments of the importance the denominations played in the creation of community are of particular use. Indeed Similar patterns of settlement can be found within Kentucky during its first few decades of settlement. See chapter 1 for an in depth study of such patterns and their impact upon community creation.

chose their denomination based on historic and cultural terms. It was situation where few German Lutherans would have chosen to join a predominately Scots-Irish Presbyterian denomination or English/Welsh congregation. Here the denominations often offered strong links to one's old European homeland and traditions. In later decades, and in particular within Kentucky, such links between ethnic cultures and denominations would not be as strongly linked as Schwartz found within Pennsylvania. Those settlers of German ancestry, for example, would as likely join the local Baptist congregation as the Lutheran within eighteenth and early nineteenth century Kentucky.

Arguments by Nelson, Schwartz, and others can be of great use when applied outside of the confines of the older settled parts of the young republic. When studying the development of backcountry societies, it becomes apparent that such environments often lacked needed social and communal institutions. Indeed, within Kentucky, there were few institutions of government other than a handful of county courts and local militias implemented at the start of settlement. Settlers were required to find their own alternatives to construct and bring order to their community and society. Here the concept of the parish or the local congregation as part of the basic component of governance becomes unmistakable. Parishes and congregations were often some of the first institutions established within a new area.

Many of the earliest religious communities within Kentucky were gathered together by either passing ministers or more frequently, as like-minded individuals settled in relatively close proximity to one another. This occurred often long before the arrival or establishment of any other civil institutions such as the courts or county government. This was possible often because the concept of ministry within many Protestant denominations was advantageous to backcountry environments. Each denomination held its own understanding of what it meant to be a minister as well as what constituted ministerial activities. Denominations could and did vary in both their definition of minster and understanding of ordination, each can be placed within one of three broadly defined models; that of the farmer preacher, the circuit rider minister, and finally the highly educated ministers. These different definitions affected the capabilities and attractions of the different denominations and helped to shape the religious order of early Kentucky.

Before continuing further, it is necessary to set out definitions of several key issues and principles for this thesis. For example, by understanding how denominations defined ministry and ultimately who could and could not be called a minister one can

begin to understand how the denominations often became the first institutions to a new area. The first model was that of the farmer preacher. Such preachers were a 'minister from the ranks of the people.'[51] Denominations that chose this form of minister, typified by the Baptist denomination, were often highly suspicious of well-educated minsters, believing that such men lost the true nature of the Gospel in their learning. The farmer preacher model also resulted in the power of licensing and ordination being vested firmly in the hands of the individual and, in many cases, independent churches.[52] This definition of ministry can be found within the minute book of many of Kentucky's Baptist congregations. An entry in the records for East Hickman Baptist Church for September 2 1787 states: 'After Divine service Proceeded and chose Br. Robert Fryar, Elder and Br. William School, Deacon, and agreed that they call Helps for their Ordination [sic].'[53] The entry suggests it was the congregation itself, as vested in the congregation's council, who chose from within its own ranks Brothers Fryar and School to higher office. Indeed, the Baptists were almost exclusively the only denomination in Kentucky to use this understanding of ministry with the Methodists, Episcopalian and Presbyterians each articulating different understandings of ministry.

The second broadly understood definition of minister was that of the circuit rider minister. Circuit rider ministers were similar, in one regard, to that of the farmer preacher. Circuit rider ministers were rarely formally educated. However, there the similarities end. The most basic understanding of circuit riders was those ministers who took to the saddle in order to attend to their flock, following in many cases a pre-existing route of stops along the way. Individuals were chosen and ordained not by individual churches but by a central body and were assigned to specific circuits on a yearly basis. Newly licensed and ordained minsters were teamed up with much more experienced minsters whereby, though not formally educated, much of the tradition and knowledge a minister needed was passed on. In other words, the circuit rider minster worked broadly along the same lines as apprenticeships did for other professions of the period. Methodists used this form of ministry, particularly throughout the

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[51] A.H. Newman, *American Church History Series Vol II: A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States.* (New York: The Christian Literature Co, 1894), 336.

[52] Baird, *Religion in America: or an account of the origin, progress, relation to the state, and present condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States.* 230.

[53]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept, 1842, September 2nd 1787, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

denomination's earliest years. Describing the composition and running of the Methodists' method of circuit riders, in 1796 the conference declared 'what shall be the time of probation of a travelling deacon for the office of elder? Ans. Every travelling deacon shall exercise that office for two years, before he be eligible to the office of an elder.'[54] The entry in the 1796 conference minutes goes on to state that it took another two years of circuit riding as a preacher before an individual was able to attain the status of a settled preacher. It seems to suggest therefore that Methodists used the method of circuit riders as a way to both meet the needs of its dispersed flock and to train its ministers. This conclusion is supported time and again by entries found in the journals of the riders themselves. A prime example is that of Richard Whatcoat, a contemporary of and fellow rider to Asbury, at the end of the eighteenth century. Writing in his journal on August 1, 1789, Richard Whatcoat details clearly the concept of circuit rider ministry. 'F[rancis] asbury Bror wills & I rode to Cornal Barrotts F[rancis] asbury preachd I Exhorted[sic][.]'[55] For Methodism there was an important distinction between preaching and exhorting with one nineteenth century apologist summing up the distinction as 'where's the difference between preaching and exhorting? Why preaching is preaching with a text and exhorting is preaching without a text.'[56] More specifically, preaching was often the domain of circuit riders and ministers who used scriptural passages as the starting point of their work, as with Presbyterian ministers. Exhorting was open to all and often used by lay leaders and individuals when speaking to crowds, often in camp meeting settings. The circuit rider model of ministry found its strongest use among the Methodists. The model allowed for denominations, such as the Methodists, to provide training to its ministers and meet the needs of a widely dispersed flock whilst at the same time, providing a system of controls on who could and could not call themselves a minster of the Methodist faith.

The final model of ministry was that of the highly educated and trained minister. Ministers found within this group differed greatly from those of the circuit rider or the farmer-preacher ministers. As has already been seen, the first two types of ministers

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[54] Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Vol 1 1796- 1836. Published by the order of the Conference. (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), 16.

[55]Bishop Richard Whatcoat, *The Journal of Bishop Richard Whatcoat*., August 1st 1789, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky,75.

[56]Richard Polwhele, *Anecdotes of Methodism. To which is added, a sermon [on 2 Cor. i. 12] on the conduct that becomes a Clergyman.*,(Cadell and Davies, Strand; and Chapple, Pall-Mall., 1800), 11.

rarely if ever held any formal training; this was not the case with last category. These ministers were trained, typically, at a denominational seminary or university such as the College of New Jersey or Kentucky's Transylvania University, founded in 1780 in part by David Rice, often receiving at the end of their studies a degree in theology from the institutions.[57] Ordination in this last group was also highly restricted. In the case of the Presbyterian denomination, early histories and accounts agree that it was through the local presbytery that individuals were formally examined and subsequently given full faculties to preach within its, the presbytery's, boundaries. The record book of the Transylvania Presbytery shows two such cases. When the Presbytery met on the 24th of April 1787, it took up the case of a Mr. James Camfer who was 'examined on divinity and approved' for the position of Catechist within the Presbyter of Transylvania.[58] At the same sitting of the Presbyter 'the examination of Mr. Thomas Meek... [was] deferred till the next session.'[59] It seems there were still questions about Mr. Meek's qualifications or his answers given in his examination, for the Presbyter felt it needed more time to consider his case. Licenses for full faculty within the Presbyterian denomination, and others that had highly trained ministers were restricted to a governing body and as in the case of Mr. Meek, not always automatically given. Whilst this model restricted the number of men in active ministry, it did result in both the laity and the broader body of clergy being able to trust in a uniformity of theology throughout.[60]

Understanding how denominations defined ministry, and ultimately who could and could not be called a minister, is important to understanding how and why denominations were often the first institutions to a new area and why and how they developed in the manner that they did. Any study that involves denominations or religious institutions, be it theological, cultural, or in the case of this thesis, historical and social, invariably comes into contact with concepts and ideas that are both nuanced

[57]The College of New Jersey was renamed in 1896 to Princeton University. The college was founded in 1746 by New Light Presbyterians for the expressed purpose of formation and education of Presbyterian ministers. Many of the denomination's most influential ministers during this period were either trained at this college or where trained by its alumni. The Rev. David Rice, for example, the founder of Presbyterianism in Kentucky was trained at the college as well as the Rev. James Finley.

[58]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], 24th of April 1787, UKSC.

[59]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], 24th of April 1787, UKSC.

[60]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* , 462–463; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 9, 282.

and technical. In such studies, language plays an important role with some languages being more adapted than others. Such languages by their structure and use offer needed precision. Often in one or two words such languages are able to describe concepts and ideas that in other languages require paragraphs or were indescribable. Latin is one such language and is often the dominant language of theology. With three genders (masculine, feminine, and neutral), five cases or declensions, and two numbers (singular and plural) Latin can convey precise meaning with every word.[61] For example, the word *sum* means 'to be' or 'I am.' *Sum* is a complete sentence unto itself requiring nothing more in order to convey meaning. Indeed, English requires two words in order to convey the very concept of *sum*, for 'be' or 'am' are insufficient in conveying the idea. Another example is the concept of *Theotokos.* Originally adopted from the Greek the term means 'the one who bears to the One who is God' or more simply 'God bearer.' Yet within Latin and Christian theology the term is even more complex referring to St. Mary the Mother of Christ and her unique position and status within Salvific history.[62]

Before beginning a study of the denominations and their impact within Kentucky therefore, some clarity of particular words used throughout this work must be established. A case in point can be found in the basic word church. On the surface, the word may seem straight forward with modern language interpreting the word as meaning the physical building. Sentences such as 'we are going to church' or 'the church is in need of repair' both utilize this concept of the church as a physical space. Yet the word may also be correctly understood as the body of the congregation. In some cases, such as within the Catholic Church, the word can be properly understood as both the entirety of the faithful, 'the universal Church' or in a regional sense such as the Church in Milwaukee. In such cases clarity must be established with definitions that are consistent throughout.

There is a second reason for establishing specific definitions for given words

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[61]John F. Collins, *A Primer of Ecclesiastical Latin* (The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 4–7.

[62] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater,* Encyclical on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church, 25 March 1987; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, ed. Timothy McDermott, New edition (Allen, Tex.: Thomas More Publishing, 1997), 513–518; Peter J Kreeft, *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics: Reasoned Answers to Questions of Faith*, 3.2.2009 edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 438–442; Noam Chomsky et al., *On Nature and Language* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002);John Ole Askedal, Ian G. Roberts, and Tomonori Matsushita, eds., *Noam Chomsky and Language Descriptions*, The Development of the Anglo-Saxon Language and Linguistic Universals (DASLU), v. 2 (Amsterdam ; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 2010); Rosanna Masiola, Renato Tomei, and (Online service) SpringerLink, *Law, Language and Translation: From Concepts to Conflicts*, SpringerBriefs in Law (Cham: Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Springer, 2015).

and that is to allow for relevant comparisons between various denominations. Protestant denominations in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, like today, varied in their organisational structures. There was a range of different structures, from denominations that were highly structured and hierarchical in nature, such as the Episcopalian or Presbyterian, to those who were more loosely affiliated and often independent, for example the Baptist, in nature. That Protestant denominations ran a gamut of structural traditions can often make it difficult to draw useful comparisons between various denominations. This has led to many historians often choosing to limit the focus of their work to either those denominations that were structurally similar or to singular events in which the disparity in organisational structures is often of less importance or irrelevant. Both Ellen Eslinger's, *Citizens of Zion* and John Boles,' *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* for example focused their works exclusively on Kentucky's camp meetings and religious revivals, while John K Nelson's, *A Blessed Company* focused exclusively on the Anglican community in Virginia and S. Scott Rohrer's, *Hopes Promise* focuses on the Moravian denomination.[63] In each case, the historian chose to side step the complex nature of denominations and their interactions within the wider environment for a more limitedly focused discussion.

This though should not be taken that such studies are impossible. They are possible, and this thesis in particular is a study of Protestantism within Kentucky. Whilst each denomination had its own particular structure that was often unique to their theology and history, comparisons can be made as long as before beginning the comparisons, said definitions are established.

Community:

Defining the concept of the community within eighteenth and early nineteenth century Kentucky can at times be difficult. How settlers understood the term could often vary. Importantly how community is understood by historians is often dependent upon the context in which the word is used. Within this thesis, community has been defined as a collection of individuals who had a common or shared bond; be it a shared history, a shared custom, or shared morality. In other words, community was that which offers a collection of individuals a common or shared identity and that united them..

The Church:

The concept of the church, like that of community, can be complex and defining

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[63] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*; Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky*; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*; Rohrer, *Hope's Promise*.

it more so. The term can be found in use by every denomination and often may have multiple meanings depending on the denomination and the context in which it is found. For example, within the Transylvania Presbytery records the term is found in use to denote a physical building, for example the Presbytery meet in April of 1787 at Lexington Church, in 1790 at Walnut Hill Church, and 1791 at Dick's River Church. In context, each of these churches was a particular physical and geographical location.[64] The term was also used to denote a specific group of laity (congregation). As when the presbytery ordered in October 1786 'that a competent number of Deacons be chosen in each church' or a year later when it received 'supplication from Paint Lick Church... [and] Hopewell Church.'[65] This dual meaning was not limited to the Presbyterians alone. Other denominations also used the term for multiple reasons, with the Baptists referring to a gathering of individuals as a church as well as the physical building, or Catholics use of Universal Church to refer to the whole of the faith.[66]

To limit confusion as well as to offer clearer arguments within this thesis the term church will be defined as the physical building that a denomination constructed. By limiting the definition to this narrow understanding it will allow for both clearer discussions and importantly useful analysis between denominations to occur. There will exist throughout this thesis a consistent definition for the building a denomination used that is independent of how any given denomination uses the term.

The Congregation:

From defining churches, the next logical definition that must be established is that of the congregation. The term congregation within modern context is often associated and links the body of individuals with the physical meetinghouse or church in which the Sabbath service is conducted. In this context, the congregation becomes defined as both the people and the building with little distinction between the two. However, within the context of this thesis, the term congregation should be more narrowly defined, limiting it to the body of individuals alone. Precedence for this understanding can be found within the context of the denominations themselves, when for example in 1786 the Transylvania Presbytery sought 'to seek after and give proper encouragement to the members of our society scattered up and down in small

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[64]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860, [microfilm], April 24th 1787 – April 27th 1791, UKSC.

[65]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 26th 1786- April 24th 1787, UKSC.

[66]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, Kentucky Historical Society Special Collections, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KHS).

settlements; to assist in organizing and supplying them as far as our circumstances will allow' or in the same year when eight individuals of the Baptist denomination came together to form a new community, later called Bryant's Station Baptist Church, they did so not with the intention to create physical spaces for community but in order to form those individuals into a common body, a congregation.[67] The term congregation was limited and clearly defined as those of individuals who had come together in a community. They existed as a separate entity from the later meetinghouse either denomination would build or from the institutions those communities would provide. Placing limits on this definition allows for comparisons and analysis between denominations at this most basic level to occur.

The Parish:

With a church defined as the physical building and a congregation as a group of individual laity then a working definition of a parish may be established. In modern context, the parish has come to denote an individual congregation and church. The early parish though was much more. With the legislation passed by the Virginia legislature in 1776 and applicable in Kentucky before 1792, the parish was geographical in scope.[68] As defined, the parish was a geographical entity and its use can be found within Kentucky's other denominations. The Presbyterians through the Rev. David Rice, for example, in creating three places of worship at Danville, Cane Run, and the Forks of Dick River, considered these three places not as individual and separate congregations, but as one congregation and in doing so were following in the footsteps of the Virginia legislature in creating a parish. The Methodist circuits carved out of Kentucky, and continuously refined over the years, were analogous in structure and in important ways modelled the idea of the parishes. Each circuit had a geographical boundary in which the rider was to work. All those settlers who fell within the boundary were, by accident of their geography, part of the circuit. Finally, even the single congregation established by the Episcopalians in 1808 in some real sense, can be seen as following suit. The congregation of Christ Church may have been located in Lexington, yet as the only Episcopalian congregation in all of Kentucky for much of the period; it would have been the spiritual home for the entire denomination in Kentucky. It was in short, by the definition of a parish, a parish unto itself. Each denomination had a concept of the

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[67] Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.; Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, KHS.

[68] Hening, *'Statutes at Large'*, *Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 261.

parish, whether the term was in use or not. By defining the parish as geographical scope and nature, like that of the congregation as a body of individuals, it allows for a study of denominations that would otherwise be cumbersome.

The Denomination:

A denomination can be properly understood as a group of congregations or religious communities that shared a common religious tradition and an agreed upon theology. Within this definition the church, congregation, and parish become local elements of the wider institution known as the denomination. Importantly both a common tradition and shared theology were necessary for a given set of congregations to be considered a separate denomination. For example, the Presbyterian denomination shared a common Calvinistic theology with Baptists, yet held similar traditions of educated ministers and hierarchical ecclesiastical structures to the Anglican/Episcopalian denomination. Yet the Presbyterian denomination was neither a variant of the Baptist or Anglican/Episcopalian denomination but a separate denomination unto itself.

This definition though should not be taken to mean that when distinctions within a denomination were made, that a new denomination was created. For example, during the First Great Awakening (1730's through 1740's) there arose differences in teachings between several congregations of Presbyterians in the colonies, later known respectively as Old Lights (those who held the traditional teaching) and New Lights. Though Old Light and New Light Presbyterians varied in teachings, each still shared both a common tradition and theology and were considered branches of the wider Presbyterian faith and not as separate denominations.[69]

Understanding how denominations are defined is one of the foundational concepts of this thesis. It is at this level that much of the discussions and analysis of how the denominations came to play an important role in the creation of Kentucky will occur. Understanding that a denomination was a religious community with an agreed upon theology and religious tradition that established congregations, built churches, and formed parishes in order to conduct its works, is that starting point.

The Sabbath:

The next useful term that must be defined was that of the Sabbath. The roots of the word are derived from Hebrew and relates to the day of the week set aside for rest

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[69] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 280–295; Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 131–161.

and religious worship. For many Protestant denominations this has often been synonymous with Sunday.[70] However, within Kentucky's backcountry this was not always possible. The dispersed nature of settlement along with the shortage of qualified ministers within many denominations meant that in many cases religious services happened only when a minister travelled through the area, regardless of the day of the week. One example, covered within chapter 2, of this thesis, was the development of camp meetings within Kentucky. Here camp meetings often occurred outside of Sunday and often lasted several days. In order to facilitate discussion and analysis, this thesis has settled for the use of the term Sabbath to denote the day in which religious services occurred, regardless of the day of the week it actually occurred.

The Presbytery:

The presbytery was a Presbyterian form of governance that existed above the congregation and was responsible to the synod. It could be formed when six or more ministers within a geographical region were permanently settled and were able to come together in community.[71] For Kentucky this occurred with the establishment of the Transylvania Presbytery in October of 1786 when four settled ministers, David Rice, Adam Rakin, Andrew McClure, and James Crawford were joined by Thomas Craighead and Terah Tamplin.[72] The Presbytery's role was to govern congregations through direct oversight while also providing guidance and advice, where and when needed. It was obligated to meet at least once a year and was required to send reports of its activities to both the regional synod and yearly General Conference. Finally, the presbytery was tasked with enacting all pertinent orders and legislation from the synod and General Conference.

The Synod:

The synod was, like the presbytery, part of the governance structure of the Presbyterian denomination. Its placement within the hierarchical structure of the denomination was between that of the presbyteries it oversaw and the General Conference to which it was required to report. It required the establishment of at least three presbyteries within a region before it could form. For Kentucky, this occurred in

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[70] 'Sabbath | sabbath, n.'. OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/169311?redirectedFrom=Sabbath (accessed July 10, 2015).

[71] *The form of Government and Forms of Process of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America as Amended and ratified by the General Assembly in 1797* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian publication committee, 1833), Chapter X.

[72] Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], 17th October 1786, UKSC.

1802 with the Presbyteries of Transylvania, West Lexington, and Washington as its founding presbyteries. The role of the synod was similar to that of the presbytery overseeing the functions of the presbyteries under its jurisdictions while offering guidance and advice when required. For many within the denomination, the synod acted as both the highest authority they would encounter as well as an important link to the wider world.

The Association:

The association was a unique function of the Baptist denomination. Its role within the denomination was similar to the functions that both the presbytery and synod held within Presbyterianism or the vestry within Episcopalianism. That function was to offer advice and guidance to its member churches on questions of membership, theology, and discipline. It was an important and useful function created by Baptist congregations in order to find support and community while retaining a theology that placed its ultimate authority on such issues with the congregation alone.

The definitions provided here will be of use throughout this thesis. They provide clarity to arguments that without these definitions can quickly become confusing and incoherent. The concept of the church, for example, has multiple meanings both within a denomination and between denominations. In one case, the word could represent a single building and in the next a form of governance that spanned several counties. Indeed, within any given example the definition could change back and forth. To that end, these definitions have been offered and clarified to prevent, as much as possible, such confusion.

The Denominations and the Creation of Community:

Kentucky's denominations played a very real and important role in the creation and development of its communities and society. Each denomination became, through the process, centres of community and society for many of the territory's settlers. Few studies have ever properly engaged this topic. Many of the works on Kentucky's denominations have chosen instead to limit their scope, either focusing specifically on revivals and the important role Kentucky played at the beginning of the Second Great Awakening or on singular denominations. This is unsurprising when one understands the challenges that exist in conducting broad denominational studies, especially within early Kentucky. Challenges such as establishing needed frames of reference for different theological and hierarchical structures; for example, in order to examine similarities is one such challenge. This thesis has attempted to overcome such challenges by

establishing definitions early on in order to facilitate such a study. There are, of course, other challenges within the historical archive of Kentucky that cannot be so easily overcome and which make such studies difficult at the best to times. The most significant difficulty is that of tracking individuals throughout this period. Few denominations, for example, kept complete or detailed membership lists throughout the period. Indeed for some denominations, such as the Presbyterians or Methodists, little membership data beyond one or two congregations exists. While with other denominations such as the Episcopalians, only recorded those individuals who were financially responsible for the congregation, recording only those individual, for example, who paid pew rental fees. Where existing congregational membership data does exist in sufficient detail there is often conversely a lack of civil data such as tax or census data to compare it too. In particular Kentucky's 1790 and 1800 census records were destroyed when two separate fires, one in 1813 and another in 1824, raged through the capitol buildings. While much of the tax records from this period survive, these records have little use for a significant portion of Kentucky's population. Such records only exist for those who held taxable property, often in the form of land. A significant portion of Kentucky's settlers often rented their land from larger land holders, and for denominations such as the Baptist or Methodists, who's members where often poorer than those for example of the Episcopalian denomination, would not necessary be found within tax record data. Added to this was the nature of Kentucky's settlement. Kentucky grew rapidly during the first few decades of settlement from the handful of Henderson's scoundrels to a population of over 73,000 by 1790.[73] Many of these first settlers were, like Daniel Boone, just as likely to keep moving west as new land and counties opened up as staying put. This adds a level of difficulty when trying to trace individuals through the historical recorded. Indeed often the only reliable sources that exist with any consistence are aggregate membership data from larger denominational institutions such as Presbyteries, Synods, and Associations along with minister journals and letters. With such challenges it is unsurprising many historians have chosen to limit the focus of their studies, and importantly such approaches have their use, but in doing so, these works ignore or overlook the important wider role denominations played. The central focus of

[73] John Filson states that as early as 1784 the population of Kentucky was at 71,815 in: Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke*, 11; Forstall, Richard L., Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC, 1996), 4; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 262.

this thesis is on this role, yet in order to understand the importance that denominations played within Kentucky and how they became centres of community and society for many of the territory's settlers, an understanding of the environment in which the denominations first arrived must be established. Chapter one of this thesis offers a study of Kentucky's early environment, focusing on understanding what the early backcountry was like for settlers and the nature in which Kentucky developed. In undertaking this study, the chapter is broken into two parts with the first covering themes of travel, settlement, and the establishment, or the lack thereof, of needed social and communal structures by civil authorities. The second part provides a contextual understanding of the denominations within this frontier. Focusing on the nature in which the denominations arrived, their perceived challenges, and what their ultimate goals were. These two parts set the context, for the rest of this work, an examination of how the denominations operated and how for many settlers they became de facto centres and important keepers of community and society, especially outside the handful of towns that would develop.

Chapters two, three, and four examine how these denominations attracted and retained settlers. This discussion begins with the focus of chapter two on how denominations, through camp meetings, began the process of bringing individuals together; importantly transcending the primitive denominational bonds that existed in order to engage a wider segment of the settler population. This process was primarily made possible because the meetings took congregations out of the local church and into the backcountry and, importantly, brought outsiders, in many cases for the first time, into direct contact with the denominations. This chapter will argue that camp meetings were much more than religious events. They were importantly small, local, and communal events in the lives of settlers. Camp meetings provided settlers with what they sought; a need for community and a sense of belonging that no other institution was able to meet so fully.74 Out of these meetings developed a new form of worship that was more inclusive, offering excluded groups specifically women, children, and slaves a chance to fully participate in the theatre of these meetings. They were also important social and communal events in the lives of those who attended. The regularity and size of camp meetings pulled together not just those individuals who were already members of congregations but nearly everyone from the surrounding area and there in

[74] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 214.

lay the importance of the meetings.

Chapter three examines the work of the denominations focusing the discussion on the importance that the local congregation played. This chapter will specifically argue that it was at this local level, after the camp meetings had ended, that settlers had the most interaction with the different denominations. For many settlers, their local congregation was often the most visible symbol of community and society for miles around. It was at this local level that the growth in membership occurred and where often settlers were able to turn, whether it was for life's milestones or for help through life's hardships. As settlers turned towards their local congregations for support, they found other reasons to stay. Importantly they found denominational institutions that were an effective alternative to civil institutions that were either not present or ineffectual. In short, the local congregation played a vital role in many settlers' day-to-day life through the use of such institutions.

Chapter four moves the discussion on to the importance of the physical church. This chapter will argue that physical church buildings affected the success of the various denominations. Those denominations that established and built physical places of worship found stability and growth throughout the period. The chapter is broken into two parts. The first part begins with very roots of the churches. The first part examines their physical structures and demonstrates how through the act of building a church the denominations were able to foster a sense of community. The second part focuses on how the layout of churches further strengthened the already established sense of community within their congregations. It also examines the role the internal governance of each denomination, from the vestries and church councils to how meetings and election of elders helped solidify the already existing sense of community.

Chapter five examines how through the creation of church buildings, the development of camp meetings, and the establishment of important church institutions, denominations brought settlers into community and began to create order within the backcountry. This chapter will specifically argue that denominations became both important agents in establishing order in the backcountry, and in influencing the development of early society. That the organising process began at the very basic level of the local congregation. It was at the local congregation that many settlers first truly engaged with the democratic process, while playing an important role in the calling of ministers as well as the election of elders, deacons, and other lay positions in their local congregation. That democratic process continued with congregation rules requiring both

debate and a free vote at monthly meetings. Such direct use of the democratic methods offered the settler a reason to become directly invested in their local congregation. This investment in turn was the ground on which order was created. Local congregations often became the epicentres of judicial power with settlers bringing a variety of cases, from drunkenness and bastardy, to land and economic disputes, not to their county court system but instead to the ecclesiastical court of the local congregation. It was there that they sought justice for a variety of cases from theological questions to more serious cases of debt, adultery, and even bastardy. As voluntary agencies, such courts had little power to enforce their decisions yet settlers found such courts useful abiding by their decisions even without the force of law to compel settlers to do so. Through the use of their democratic process, the denominations were able to create a community and a framework within which such communities could both exist and function on the frontier.

Chapter six will finally examine the fragility of this order and the systems that the denominations built. By focusing on several controversies and schisms that individual denominations faced throughout these early years, this chapter will show how the denominations were able to bind society together often preventing it from fracturing into opposing camps. To that end, along with some of the significant controversies faced by the denominations, this chapter will also examine the contentious and divisive issue of slavery and its impact upon the denomination.

Finally, the concluding chapter will bring together the arguments and ideas from each of preceding chapters to argue the importance the denominations played in the creation and development of Kentucky's society. It will place each chapter in the context of the central argument of this thesis.

Through these six chapters, this thesis will argue that, for Kentucky's settlers, the denominations were the centres of their world, often providing needed services and importantly a sense of community and belonging. Kentucky's denominations did this by participating in a very real and important way in the creation of that community and society. That creation began with the use of camp meetings, continued in the local congregation, and was strengthened by the ability of these denominations to offer useful alternatives for settlers to the civil institutions they required. That process began with camp meetings. These meetings were small, local, and communal gatherings in the lives of settlers, combining both social and religious events into one. It was at those meetings that the denominations were able to interact with settlers outside the traditional bounds

of the religious service or physical church. By taking the denominations outside these more traditional arenas, ministers were able, through camp meetings, to begin a process of bringing individuals together. The camp meeting season though was short, often running only from May to September, and it was at the local congregational level that the denominations were able to build on the work begun at camp meetings beginning to bind settlers into a community. It was at the local level that settlers had the most interaction with the denominations and where they often turned to for needed alternatives for civil institutions, for example, ecclesiastical courts or denominational schools. Whether it was for life's milestones, or for help through life's hardships, for many settlers the local congregation was where they turned to for that support. The denominations built upon the work of the congregations through the establishment of physical churches. Churches during this period were expensive undertakings in time, money, and resources for the denominations and their local congregations. Yet these churches were important physical symbols, offering both stability and community for settlers. Construction required settlers to commit both limited resources and time to the project, and in doing so often became invested in the region around the congregation.

The work of the denomination from the establishment of camp meetings, the institution of needed ecclesiastical services, to the creation of physical churches brought settlers into contact with the denomination and began a process of ordering the backcountry. To understand how and why the denominations were able to do this, an in depth study of Kentucky's early environment must first be undertaken. The first chapter will centre on this study focusing on what the early backcountry was like for settlers and the nature in which it developed. It will also offer a contextual understanding of the denominations within this frontier. This chapter will set the context and background, for the rest of this thesis, an examination of how the denominations operated and how for many settlers, they became de facto centres and important keepers of community and society, especially outside the handful of towns that would develop.

Chapter One

The Kentucky Backcountry: The Denominations, Settlers, and Settlement

'My Dear and beloved Sister I received your Letter by Mr Wren and know not whether joy or greif [sic] gave rise to my feelings at the moment but my tears in spite of me flowed most plenteously [sic]...so mixed with the Idea of the long distance between you and myself, and your other fond and anxious friends, that I hardly can describe my feelings' wrote Eliza Powell to her sister Eleanor.[1] Powell's letter to her sister held a complex mix of emotions that was not uncommon for many settlers. Powell's words conveyed a sense of loneliness and feelings of abandonment that many settlers felt in their new lives in Kentucky. Yet many of the earliest tales retold and republished in the east told not of loneliness and isolation, but described to potential settlers what seemed, to many, to be an almost Edenic paradise just over the mountain. Such reports would have shaped the perceptions of early settlers to Kentucky. One later traveller, for example, described Kentucky as a place of 'a thousand nameless beauties peculiar to such places almost made me imagine myself on enchanted ground.'[2]

Those first reports of Kentucky began with the arrival of the explorers and long-hunters to Kentucky. Among these first pioneers were John Finley (also known as Findley) and his group in 1767 as well as a group that would include both Daniel and Squire Boone in 1769.[3] Early reports of the earlier travels of James McBride and his company in the 1750's may have been the catalyst for such groups, but it was their stories and tales of what was then called *Kentuck* that would result in the territory's population exploding to over 73,000 by the time of the 1790 census.[4] As these stories spread in the east, friends and family of those who had been over the Appalachians were

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[1] S. Eliza Powell to Eleanor Peers, June 17th 1803, Valentine Peers Papers, Kentucky Historical Society Special Collections, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KHS).

[2] Wade Hall, "*Along the Wilderness Trail: A young Lawyer's 1785 letter from Danville Kentucky to Massachusetts.*" Filson Club History Quarterly, 61 (July 1987), 288.

[3] John Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke : And an Essay towards the Topography and Natural History of That Important Country* (Wilmington Del. : Printed by James Adams, 1784), 9.

[4] John Filson states that as early as 1784 the population of Kentucky was at 71,815 in: Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke*, 11; Forstall, Richard L., Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC, 1996), 4; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 262.

sought out for information. Daniel Trabue was one such individual and recalled of the experience: 'They asked me a bundence [sic] of questions about Kentucky and the Indians. I told them all about it. My Relations and the neighbours all would come to see me and I must go to see them in return.'[5] Importantly though, many of those early settlers were the prototypical frontiersmen and long-hunters, like the Boone brothers, who were seasoned to the trials and hardships that existed in the backcountry.[6] Henderson referred to such men, and an overwhelming majority were men, as being little more than 'scoundrels.' These first individuals were, in short, used to the rigours of life in the wilderness in a way that many of the immigrants that would follow were not. For many of the settlers that would follow though Kentucky was, to take a phrase from Shakespeare's play Hamlet, an 'undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn no traveller return[ed].'[7] Shakespeare may have been referring to death in the context of an undiscovered country, yet Hamlet's line was apt and descriptive of the territory for many settlers during the late eighteenth century. For settlers like Powell, Kentucky's backcountry was an 'undiscovered country', a new world where little had been established and settlers were often on their own. Kentucky was, as a result of factors such as severed family ties, the nature of Kentucky's settlement, and the lack of established institutions, a place where loneliness and isolation often abounded.

Understanding the experience settlers had of the backcountry, the nature in which it developed, and the role the denominations would play in the creation and establishment of community is the central focus of this chapter. The chapter will be broken into two major parts. The first part will focus on a study of the typical settler covering themes of travel, settlement, and the establishment, or the lack thereof, of needed social structures by civil authorities. This study will provide the context and an understanding of the sense of loneliness and isolation settlers often felt. That sense of loneliness often took hold long before settlers arrived in Kentucky, beginning with the travel to Kentucky that settlers were required to undertake. That trip was often a one-

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[5] Daniel Trabue, *Daniel Trabue's Narrative*, Draper Manuscripts Collection 57J:33(here after DM) Lyman Copeland Draper and State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Kentucky papers*, The Draper Manuscript ([Madison, Wis.]: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey [distributor]).

[6] Squire Boone was a Baptists preacher but there is little evidence that he engaged this profession during his stay in Kentucky. Indeed whilst he is credited with being one of the first to explore Kentucky he was not seen as the denomination's first preachers.

[7] Richard Henderson, *Journal of Co. Richard Henderson, March 20 – July 12, 1775,* DM1CC21-105; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet Prince of Denmark,* 3.1.

way affair for many, and meant leaving family and loved ones back home as they travelled to a new and 'undiscovered country.' It was that loneliness that drove settlers to seek out a community and brought them into contact with often the only institution, civil or otherwise, that was available, the denominations. The second part will focus on a study of the denominations within Kentucky at their beginnings focusing in particular on the nature in which each denomination arrived, the challenges faced, and what their ultimate goals were. These two parts will both set the context and form the starting point of the central theme for the rest of this thesis. That theme of the denominations and their role in the formation and creation of community for many of Kentucky's settlers.

Part 1: The Settlers.

Henderson's ‘scoundrels' of 1775 were comprised mainly of long-hunters and woodsmen such as Daniel Boone. These first individuals to arrive in Kentucky were seasoned veterans of the backcountry, used to the frequent isolation and difficulties found in the harsh environment. Such individuals may have been some of the first people to arrive, explore, and settle in Kentucky, but they were not the last nor were they typical of the settlers who followed.[8]

Those settlers that followed Henderson's 'scoundrels' were not experienced in the stresses the wilderness could impose on travellers. For these settlers, the wilderness was more difficult, dangerous, and threatening, with its most striking difficulty the feeling of isolation and loneliness. Indeed the isolation and loneliness that Powell conveyed in her letter would have started long before she had fully settled in her new home.

Mary Coburn Dewees, undertaking the journey in 1788, recounted many of her companions falling ill along the trail as well as her own 'uneasiness for fear' of her own

[8] The first Europeans or European-Americans to set foot in Kentucky were not as Kentucky legend holds James McBride and his companions in 1754 but were most probably a variety of Priests and Brothers, predominately French, from the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits, who were engaged in ministering to the Native tribes in the decades before. Detailed accounts particularly those found in volumes 59, 66, and 69, of *The Jesuit Relations* find mentions of these Jesuit Fathers and Brothers travelling, ministering too, and living among native tribes on both the Mississippi and Ohio rivers as well as in the surrounding areas. These accounts recount in some detail Jesuits active among the various native tribes in the region strongly suggesting that Jesuits were active from as early as the mid seventeenth century all the way through the Revolutionary War period in what would later be Kentucky. Though an important part of the wider tapestry of exploration and life beyond the Appalachian Mountains before the Revolutionary War Jesuit involvement was at best minimal. The only evidence they left was that of their accounts that were for the most part sent back to Rome and were rarely widely available till modern times.

sickness returning.[9] Dewees felt such isolation that she related her situation to that of being like the children of Israel lost in the desert for forty years.[10] Sickness and the associations to Biblical hardships only added to feelings of isolation and loneliness for inexperienced settlers. For the settlers that followed, the feeling of isolation began the moment they made their decision to migrate. For many, making the decision meant leaving behind the extended family and social support networks with which they had grown up and entering into a foreign world. This sense of isolation was compounded by the need to make important, and in many cases life altering, decisions from the start. William Calk, one of those first settlers, and one of Henderson's scoundrels, described a journey 'that tried us all almost to death' as he and his companions faced difficult mountain passes, temperamental weather, and a constant fear of Indian attacks.[11] Often the only other humans Calk and his companions met on their journey were those individuals who had turned back disheartened by the difficulties that lay before them.[12] Many were unprepared for the journey and travelled in a near constant state of danger, fear, and often isolation.

Communication between the older settled parts of the young republic and the newly opened West was infrequent at the best of times. That meant that few settlers who undertook the path of migration west would have fully understood the hardships that were to follow or the importance of their first decisions. That first important decision was the choice of which route to take.[13]

Access to Kentucky for settlers was provided through two separate avenues, as early as the expeditions of Findly and Boone in the 1760s. The most common way into the region for many settlers and explorers was by land, over the Allegheny Mountains and typically through the Cumberland Gap. Less common and more expensive was the route by river, down the Ohio. Either route was difficult at the best of times and could

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[9]'Mrs. Mary Dewees's Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky', Register of the Kentucky Historical Society 63 (1965) 195-217.

[10] Mrs. Mary Dewees's Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky', Register of the Kentucky Historical Society 63 (1965) 195-217.

[11] William Calk, *William Calk Journal: Leaving Virginia to come to Kentucky,* Calk's Family Collection: Series 2 – William Calk, 1758- 1823 Box 7, Folder 96, KHS.

[12]William Calk, *William Calk Journal,* Wednesday 26th April 1775, KHS.

[13]Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Elizabeth A Perkins and Shane, John Dabney, *Border Life Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 60-62.

become treacherous if the weather turned, if settlers became lost, or if they came across Native American war parties on their route. Even experienced explorers and woodsmen could face hardship and danger. Nathan Boone, for example, recalled to Draper in an interview, one story told by his father Daniel Boone of his first trip to Kentucky. By this time, Daniel Boone was in his thirties and an experienced hunter and woodsman, yet he and his companions 'ware ketched [sic] in a snow storm and had to Remain the winter' in the territory with only a few supplies and their knowledge of the land.[14] Boone and his companions survived yet the story illustrates that even the most experienced individuals faced challenges that could and did test them, often to their limits. If Daniel Boone could be caught off guard by a change in the weather that delayed him a whole season, the typical settler would have faced much greater difficulties.

The Journey:

The first major decision settlers faced was in deciding which of the two routes, overland or down the Ohio River, into Kentucky to take. That decision may seem to modern readers as an uncomplicated or even a basic decision yet for the settler that decision could have important ramifications later on. The river route was often physically easier on settlers but more expensive. The overland route over the Allegheny Mountains and through the Cumberland Gap, later known as the Wilderness Road, was cheaper but more physically strenuous. Either route though enforced its own particular form of isolation upon the traveller. Understanding how settlers saw, and even more importantly experienced, their journeys will be important in understanding why settlers like Powell conveyed feelings of isolation as well as the importance they often placed on the work of the denominations later on.

The river route was often the less physically strenuous of the two routes yet it held its own challenges. The route began for many of these settlers not on the Ohio River but often on the Monongahela River at Redstone Pennsylvania, ten miles upstream from Fort Pitt.[15] The Rev. David Barrow, a settler on his way to Kentucky in 1795, described Redstone as 'a little village on the Monogahela River... The inhabitants of this place... appear to make a great deal of money from emigrants of the eastern

[14] Lyman Copeland Draper interview with Nathan and Olive Boone, September 1851, DM6S7.

[15] David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary,* 23rd May 1795, DM12CC165.

states, from boat making and furnishing provisions.'[16]

Here potential and future settlers gathered to either purchase boats for the trip down the river or to find passage for themselves and their belongings. Often individual families gathered together in larger groups for both protection and to reduce the costs. One traveller, Victor Collot in 1794 described the boats 'called Kentucky boats' as having the 'form of a great oblong, varying in its proportions from thirty to fifty feet in length, and from twelve to twenty in width, but never less than four in depth.'[17] These vessels were little more than a rectangle with a flat bottom that could often be fashioned in a handful of days. As a result though such boats were intended as little more than one time vessels. Their construction emphasised that this was a one-way trip only. There would be no return. The result though was, whether settlers were conscious of it or not, a moment of no return for those who took this path to Kentucky. Once emigrants stepped on the raft at Redstone there was little chance of a return, and for many it was the beginning of a feeling of isolation as they boarded their boats and entered a confined space that would be their world for the entirety of the trip down the river.

Once a boat was purchased, or travel arrangements were secured, settlers were ready to depart. The typical trip down the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers from Redstone to Limestone took between one and two weeks. The Rev. David Barrow's trip in 1795 was typical. Barrow and his companions left Redstone on the 24th of May and arrived at Limestone seven days later on the 30th of May.[18] Though journeys could and did take longer, James Hedge, for example, recalled to Draper that his family's trip took around eighteen days.[19] The disparity in time it took one group to make the trip versus another was often a result of several factors such as weather conditions, water levels, and fears of Native American attacks. While fears of Native American reprisals may have been omnipresent in many settlers' minds, and the boats were made with four walls for this reason, for most travellers inclement weather was often the biggest challenge they faced.

Barrow may have made his trip in just seven days, but he and his companions

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[16]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary,* 23rd May 1795, DM12CC165.

[17] Victor Collot, *A Journey in North America, Containing a Survey of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and Other Affluing Rivers,* 2 Vol., vol. 1 (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1826), 32-33.

[18] David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary,* 24rd May 1795- 30th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[19] David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary,* 24rd May 1795- 30th May 1795, DM12CC165.
JDS interview with James Hedge interview, DM12CC117.

faced three days of bad weather. The weather turned quickly for Barrow and threatened the safety of the entire party. Barrow wrote 'this evening about 12 o'clock came on a severe thunder gust (we were at this time in what is called the long reach). Here our crew were all of a sudden called out of sleep. The scene was awful. All hands were at what they could do, in the midst of horror and darkness.'[20] All made it through the night and importantly so too did the boat. On the following afternoon, the crew and passengers faced yet more bad weather this time 'rain with heavy hail some as large as a partridge's egg...this was shortly succeeded by repeated heavy showers of rain.'[21] At this point the boat was inundated with rainwater leaving those on board with no dry deck on which to rest. The bad weather for the day was not over, however, for that evening 'a thick fog' rolled in. The fog made navigation down the river especially perilous. Barrow recorded that it 'subjected us to frequent alarms for fear of being dashed on islands or against trees on one shore or the other.'[22] Finally, the next day, saw more rain though this time Barrow wrote 'without thunder.'[23] Two days later Barrow and his companions landed at Limestone 'fatigued and exhausted' but in one piece.[24] So too their boat made the trip, all be it heavily laden with rain water, in one piece. Barrow and his companions were lucky; others though were not as fortunate.

Travellers faced the constant threats of stranding their boats on sandbars or rocks that could damage boats and loss of lives. Such accidents could cause substantial delays. Nathan Ewing recalled that his boat ended stranded for the entire winter in1784 after it hit a sandbar.[25] In 1787 Samuel Shepherd noted numerous boats in difficulty on the river. Not all the boats could be saved and some of the passengers were drowned or died of the cold.[26]

The river route down the Ohio was relatively quick compared to the overland route, taking typically around one to two weeks to complete from Pittsburgh to

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[20]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary*, 26th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[21]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary*, 27th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[22]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary*, 27th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[23]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary*, 28th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[24]David Barrow, *Rev. David Barrow Diary*, 30th May 1795, DM12CC165.

[25] Nathan Ewing Statement, DM 25S43.

[26] Samuel Shepard's Journal in Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 125–129.

Limestone, but it was still very dangerous. Variable and unpredictable weather along with the dangers of the river itself resulted in some settlers losing both lives and homes (in the form of supplies) long before they made it to their destinations. Other migrants, like the Rev. David Barrow, though arriving in one piece were left exhausted and worn out both physically and emotionally from the journey. For those who chose this route the trip down the Ohio, the journey imposed its form of isolation and loneliness upon settlers. The trip was a one-way trip. There was no turning back once it began. Additionally, although the trip was less physically demanding than the overland route, the boat for many became a world unto itself. Indeed, for the settler who chose this path, the four sides and bottom of the boat became their entire world with no place to hide or run to if something happened. The settler was trapped, for lack of a better term, within the confines of the boat for the entire journey. Interpersonal conflicts, the weather, and the water could not be avoided and had to borne. In short the boat was an island unto itself and for the eternity of the journey the settler's world was not much larger than fifty feet by twenty.

The other option for settlers was the overland route though it was no safer and had its own challenges. This path for many settlers often began at a place called the Block House, the last stopping point east of Allegheny Mountains and travelled through what was referred to as 'the wilderness.' The wilderness, though an overly broad term, had a specific meaning during much of this period and in the words of one traveller was specificity defined as the '195 miles from the block house to the first settlement in Kentucky.'[27] Much of this route consisted of little more than 'animal trails' and 'man-made footpaths' with its most striking feature being the lack of any man-made structure for the entirety of the 195 miles. In reality, this meant settlers had no access to shelter if the weather turned, no access to food stores if supplies were lost in river crossings, and not even signposted routes for those who inevitably became lost. Indeed the route was described by Richard Henderson in 1775 as 'no part of the road [being] tolerable.'[28] While William Calk, who travelled with Henderson, wrote of the constant need to ford rivers and creeks ‘many times,’ many of which had 'Bad Banks.'[29] Finally, the Rev.

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[27]Wade Hall, “*Along the Wilderness Trail: A young Lawyer's 1785 letter from Danville Kentucky to Massachusetts.*” Filson Club History Quarterly, 61 (July 1987), 292-93.

[28]Richard Henderson to Transylvania Company, June 11 1775, DM3B194.

[29]William Calk. *William Clak's journal: Leaving Virginia to come to Kentucky.*, 5th April 1775, Calk's Family Collection: Series 2 – William Clak, 1758- 1823 Box 7, Folder 96 KHS.

Francis Asbury nearly two decades later in 1790 described the route as 'like being at sea, in some respects and in others worse.'[30] Such descriptions were apt for the route was neither easy nor straightforward. Daniel Boone and his companions first established the most common route from the Block House to either Crab Orchard or Boonesborough in 1775. Boone used his previous experiences in the region linking many of the already existing animal paths when possible while at other times cutting the most direct path through dense forests. While the route Boone chose was directly related to his knowledge of the area, and would have been relatively easy for him, it was not the most advantageous route for many of the settlers who would follow over the next couple of decades. Before its widening and improvement in the 1790's, the route was inaccessible to wagons requiring those who chose this path into Kentucky to do so often on foot or, in the rare cases when horses could be afforded, on horseback. Even on horseback the route was still difficult as frequent river crossings meant dismounting and coaxing the horses across one at a time. This route meant that even if settlers had access to horses they could often only take possessions that could be easily carried. In its own way the challenges of this route enforced a sense of loneliness and abandonment as household goods and larger family heirlooms or possessions by necessity of the route had to stay behind.

This route, which later in the century after it was widened would come to be known as the 'Wilderness Road,' involved not just crossing over a major mountain range, a task unto itself, but also fording five major rivers and an innumerable number of smaller creeks. With each fording, settlers took significant risks. Calk recalled having to repeatedly 'toat our packs over on a tree & swim our horses over.'[31] Several times gear and equipment fell into the river with, in one case, much of it being lost. Lost equipment could be detrimental to a settler, but a river crossing could be much more dangerous to life and limb. Allen Trimble recalled his mother almost dying in a crossing when her horse was panicked and bolted into the river.[32]

Alongside the perils of fording rivers, travellers were in almost constant fear of

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[30]Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 73.

[31] William Calk. *William Clak's journal: Leaving Virginia to come to Kentucky.* 12th April 1775, Calk's Family Collection: Series 2 – William Clak, 1758- 1823 Box 7, Folder 96 KHS.

[32] Allen Trimble, *Autobiography and Correspondence of Allen Trimble: Governor of Ohio, with Genealogy of the Family* (s.n., 1909), 207–208.

attack at any time from Native Americans. John May wrote to an acquaintance in 1780, that he had made it safely to Kentucky, but he added that he felt 'the continual apprehension we were under, of an Attack from the Indians, there being one Day after we left Holston, but news was brought us of some Murders being committed by those savages.'[33] A decade later little had changed, Asbury wrote of his fears in 1790. 'We Formed the whole of our company at the Valley Station; Besides brother W___t and myself, we were sixteen men, having thirteen guns only. We moved very swiftly, considering the roughness of the way, traveling [sic], by my computations thirty-five miles to-day [sic].'[34] Asbury's words hint at the dangers both real and perceived by these early travellers. Even a man of God, as Asbury undoubtedly was, who only a few entries earlier stated that he 'feared the face of no man', worried about 'having only thirteen guns' within his travelling party.[35] Asbury's worries became more manifest a few lines later, writing 'We stopped at M__'s, whose wife, now a tender, gracious soul, was taken prisoner by Indians during the last war… I saw the graves of the slain- Twenty-four in one camp. I learn[ed] that they had set no guard.'[36] Such fears were common enough for travels both ways, that many advertisements for travel parties arranged for collective protection were a regular feature within the *Kentucky Gazette*, with many of these advertisements ending with a common line from those leaders of such groups 'request[ing]... that every man will come well arm-ed.'[37] For the settler population and travellers, such fears remained a constant throughout both the region and the period.

The overland route was more common and less expensive of the two routes, requiring little more than oneself and a willingness to walk. Yet, the overland route was often more difficult than the route down the Ohio. The overland route offered its own set of challenges as travellers negotiated in the words of Asbury a route that consisted of 'mountains, steep hills, deep rivers, and muddy creeks; a thick growth of reeds for miles together; and no inhabitants but wild beasts and savage men.'[38]

Even if the expedition made it across the 195 miles of wilderness from the Block

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[33]John May to Samuel Bell, 15th April 1780, Beal-Booth Family Papers, Filson Historical Society.

[34]Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury*, Friday 7 May 1790, 73-74.

[35]Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* Tuesday 13 April 1790, Friday 7 May 1790.

[36]Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury*, Friday 7 May 1790, 73- 74.

[37]Kentucky Gazette (Lexington, Ky.: 1789), May 10, 1790.

[38]Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* Tuesday 11th May 1790, 73.

House to Kentucky's first settlement intact and with most, if not all, of their equipment, settlers would, like their brethren who came down the Ohio, have been left exhausted and worn out just as the hardships of settlement were about to begin. The nature of the journey underlined both physically and psychologically the extent to which early Kentucky was an isolated community. In many ways, settlement in Kentucky in the 1780s should be likened to the early colonies established in New England and the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century. Consequently, the decision to migrate to Kentucky was not one taken lightly, and once in Kentucky settlers knew that their connections with friends, families and markets in the East would be tenuous at best.

The effects and feelings of isolation did not end when settlers arrived either at Limestone or Crab Orchard for settlers still had to traverse inland routes to their final destination be it a station, town, or family homestead. Many settlers were also just as likely to become lost once in Kentucky as when on their journey to the territory. One traveller, Spencer Records, landing at Limestone in early days of settlement in1783, became lost after he chose the wrong trail on his way to Bryant's Station. Records knew he needed to follow the Licking River but still became lost and sought directions from passing hunters to locate the station.[39] Another settler, Benjamin Hardesty following much the same trail as Records became much more lost on his way to Bryant's Station that it took him over two weeks to complete the trail.[40] Of the experience, Hardesty wrote 'We got out of our road at Lower Lick, and got lost with our wagons before we got to Bryant's Station' adding 'we took the wrong buffalo trace, of a good many that came in to the lick. Were two weeks getting to Bryant's Station from Maysville.'[41] Roughly the same amount of time it would have taken for him to travel down the Ohio. One reason settlers such as Records and Hardesty became lost was the result of the nature of the trails in Kentucky itself. Such paths and routes within the territory were little more than pre-existing Indian paths or buffalo trails and were ill defined. Importantly though, for settlers such as Records and Hardesty there were difficulties not just with the ill-defined paths that made up Kentucky's internal routes but also the lack of either settlements or other travellers from whom directions could be gained. Settlers faced a constant struggle not to lose precious equipment or their lives. Added to this was

[39]Spencer Records' Narrative, DM 23CC19-23.

[40] JDS interview with Benjamin Hardesty, DM11CC169.

[41]JDS interview with Benjamin Hardesty, DM11CC169.

the near constant fear of Indian attacks at every stage that left settlers feeling isolated and alone. Once settlers arrived at their final destination, these fears along with the known dangers of travel could become overwhelming, leaving many to feel isolated from society. Relocation to Kentucky marked a complete break from settlers' previous lives in the east. This separation was both physical and psychological. Settlers in Kentucky were only too aware of their isolation and separation and the nature of settlement and the placement of towns that grew up in the territory did little to alleviate feelings of isolation and abandonment.

Settlers faced significant difficulties in their quest for Kentucky. From the starting decision of the route to take to the dangers found on the route, each point in the journey left settlers feeling isolated and alone. For settlers making the trip to Kentucky, the journey was much closer in reality to journeys undertaken in the seventeenth century to settle the New World than those of more recent generations. Settlers were in many ways, like those from earlier generations, establishing a new colony, rather than simply expanding upon existing settlements. Kentucky was for these settlers Shakespeare's 'undiscovered' country, in other words, a new world. Such a decision to make the journey, and the consequences of it, left its mark on settlers and once arrived those feelings of loneliness and isolation could only grow as settlers quickly learned Kentucky offered little more than land. One traveller through Kentucky in 1796, Mose Austin, recounted as much. Austin recalled seeing poverty stricken settlers, among them women and children 'with out Shoe or Stocking, and barely as maney rags as covers their Nakedness, with out money or provisions... Ask these Pilgrims [sic] what they expect... the Answer is Land. have you any. No, but I expect I can git it. have you anything to pay for land, No... can any thing be more Absurd than the Conduct of man[?] here is hundreds Travelling hundreds of Miles, they Know not for what Nor Whither, except its to Kentucky... when arriv.d at this Heaven in Idea what do they find? a goodly land I will allow[,] but to them [a] forbiden Land. exhausted and worn down with distress and disappointment they are at last Oblig'd to become hewers of wood and Drawers of water.'[42]

[42] Moses Austin, "The Journal," *The American Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (1900): 525-26.

Settlement:

Once settlers arrived, the process of settlement could begin. Settlement of Kentucky began in the middle part of the decade of the 1770's. 1774 saw James Harrod and around fifty men establish the town of Harrodstown, later called Harrodsburg. At about the same time, March of 1775, another group of settlers established a competing town a few miles away. This town, known as Boonesborough, for many held the distinction of being the first permanent and continual settlement in the territory. Henderson, following the pattern of previous entrepreneurs such as William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, had intended to create a new distinct and separate colony. This plan though was not to be, for after receiving petitions from some settlers the Virginia legislature in 1776 quickly pressed its own claim on the territory annexing it to the existing county of Fincastle before carving out the County of Kentucky.[43] The result was that from January 1st 1777, the government in Virginia actively enforced its claim on all land within the territory. Exceptions were made for those settlers already in the territory who had improved the land by cultivating crops and building a cabin by June 1st 1776.[44] Such settlers were allowed to register their new claim along with 400 acres. These new acts of legislation were intended to create an orderly pattern of settlement, yet what resulted was anything but orderly.

For many settlers arriving in the early years, their first destination once in Kentucky was not a family farm on the four or five hundred acres many sought. Because of the almost constant threat of attack by Indian raiding parties, for much of Kentucky's earliest period, till 1794, newly arrived settlers often found themselves within the bounds of either stations or forts. Such places were defensive in nature providing a sense of security for settlers against the ever-present fear of native attacks. Stations were the more common of the two, and could be easily built. Spencer Records described a station as 'cabins all set close together, half-faced or the roof all sloping one way with high sides out.'[45] Another early settler Elijah Foley added that often cabins were placed 'in the form of a half H' for support and security.[46] Stations became the first symbols of security both physically and emotionally for settlers. Daniel Drake recalled

[43]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, vol. IX, 1821, 257-261.

[44]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, vol. IX, 1821, 349-368.

[45]Spencer Records' Narrative, DM 23CC.

[46]Elijah Foley, DM11 CC 133.

later in life that 'the Indians one night attacked a body of travellers, encamped a mile from our village on the road to Washington.'[47] The attack ended with one traveller dead, and the men of Drake's station, his father and uncles among them, sent off to support the travellers. Yet Drake added that 'the alarm of my mother and aunts, communicated, of course, to all the children, was deep and the remembrance of the scene was long and kept vividly alive by talking it over and over.'[48]

Such stories of 'Indian wars, midnight butcheries, captivities, and horse-stealing, were daily topics of conversation' strengthened the settlers' already strongly felt feelings of isolation and separation from the wider world.[49] Stations may have provided security, but they were also importantly isolated islands. Drake recounted that at his station there were only approximately five cabins, three of which belonged to his extended family.[50] Elijah Foley's station at about twenty families was bigger but not by much.[51] No accurate counts were kept for the average size of a station, but their very nature meant many were only a handful of families, often related, in a small number of cabins. While they provided security, both physical and emotional, they were not conducive to the creation of community. There was often little beyond the walls of the family cabin, and the closest neighbours were often a mile or more away. The lack of suitable roads and the near constant fear often left settlers feeling isolated and alone on the edge of the frontier, but this was the norm for many settlers until 1794. Their impact though on the wider society of Kentucky was a continual sense of isolation and separation for settlers and would be felt for nearly a decade to come. These stations were widely scattered across the landscape and communication between them could often be difficult. Life in the frontier stations heightened a sense of isolation from the rest of society.

After the events of the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August of 1794 and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville, signed the following year, in August of 1795, stations became of less importance as the threats of Indian attacks subsided. Settlers and their

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[47]Daniel Drake and Charles D. (Charles Daniel) Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky : A Series of Reminiscential Letters from Daniel Drake, M.D., to His Children* (Cincinnati : Robert Clarke & Co., 1870), 22–23.

[48]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 23.

[49]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 23.

[50]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 12- 14.

[51]Elijah Foley, DM11 CC 133.

families moved from the confines of these stations and forts and dispersed across vast distances to family farms. Settlers replaced the close quarters of stations for the isolation of their cabins with little connection to surrounding communities. The number of acres varied from one family to the next. Tax records for Madison County in 1792, for example, showed that farms could be as small as 27 acres, such as that owned by Andrew Kennady, or could be estates of several thousand acres in size, such as that held by David Acres at 2,200.[52] Typically though family farms were between 100 and 600 acres. 1797 tax records for Mercer County suggest much the same with the smallest land-holding at 25 acres, held by one George Berry and the largest held by George Nicholas at 17,000 acres, yet like Madison County most farms were between 100 and 500 acres. This equated to a separation between farms at between one third and one and a half miles. For the average settler and his family, the reality of such a population density combined with a lack of usable roads was a continual sense of isolation. Accounts from Daniel Drake and others recall rarely seeing other settlers for long stretches of time.[53] That sense of isolation and loneliness led many to seek out any form of community they could find.

The pattern of settlement that developed in Kentucky had a direct impact on the development and creation of needed social structures. The legislation that created Kentucky in 1776 called for the establishment of only a few of the institutions that could create a fully functioning community and society. Chiefly, the legislature of Virginia was concerned only with those institutions that directly related to law and order in the new territory. To that end, the first decree after the establishment of Kentucky County dealt specifically with 'the administration of justice in the said count[ty].'[54] Its first priority was to set the court days of the county.[55] Further, the act established Harrodsburg as the temporary seat of the county court, as well as making appointments of a sheriff, justices, and a court clerk. [56]

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[52]Madison County Tax Assessment, 1792 [microfilm], KDLA.

[53]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 14-23.

[54]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 258.

[55]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 258.

[56]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 57-260.

Such an institution was important, yet its impact on the average settler was limited at best. Only those settlers, who either directly held land, those who were not tenant farmers or hired hands and could be called for the county's jury, or those individuals who were called in front of the court, would have felt their impact in any meaningful way. The size of Kentucky also played an important role in limiting the impact that this institution had on the lives of settlers. The original County of Kentucky held the same bounds as the modern state does and encompassed over 37,000 square miles of territory. This was a vast area for one county court system to oversee. Though the original territory was relatively quickly divided three separate times into nine counties, by 1792 little had improved. Fayette County, one of the original three counties created out of Kentucky County in 1780 was still at just over 435 square miles in size, a significant area to govern. While courts and court days were important to local communities, the extent to which they could provide a broader social institution to bring society together was extremely limited.

The original act of establishment also concerned itself with other areas of law and order by providing in addition for the creation of a county militia.[75] As a part of the wider establishment of law and order within the territory, the militia was a vital institution. Its role was to protect settlers from outside threats, and within the context of Kentucky this often meant both protection from Indian raids and the organization of counter raids on nearby Native American villages in the hope of providing security for the early settlements. The militia's role though as a social institution was limited only to those of enlistment age.[76] The 1775 Virginia act regulating the militia, defined as eligible for service 'all free male persons, hired servants, and apprentices, above the age of sixteen, and under fifty years, except such as are hereafter excepted.' The legislation would be amended in 1784 to raise the minimum age for service from 16 to 18.[77] The act exempted many individuals among these were 'clergymen and dissenting ministers, the president, professors, students, and scholars, of William and Mary college, the

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[75]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 260.

[76]Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 107–110; Stone Jr., *A Brittle Sword: The Kentucky Militia, 1776-1912* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977). 1; Harry S. Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

[77] Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 27-28.

keeper of the publick [sic] jail, all overseers of four tithables [sic] residing on a plantation, and all millers, and persons concerned in iron works.'[78] For those who were eligible, militia service and the required muster days that came along with their obligations could be an invaluable opportunity to interact and socialize with others from around the county. Indeed, many muster days were known to be entertaining events for those present, and often included copious amounts of alcohol.[79] Recalling a muster day in Kentucky's parent state Virginia William Byrd wrote 'I caused the troops to be exercised by each captain and they performed but indifferently for which I reproved them... When all was over we went to dine with Capitan Jefferson... most of the company went home with John Bolling and got drunk.'[80] Within Kentucky James Finley recalled much the same writing 'when rural residents met liqueur often followed a house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could their be a log rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding, or a funeral without the aid of alcohol.' There is little doubt that within Kentucky alcohol would have been an important part of muster days and would have provide for Kentucky's militia much the same benefits as it did within Virginia. The militia then had the potential to form a social institution binding together many disparate components of Kentucky society.

However, the legislation as written meant that as a social institution the militia directly ignored a significant portion of the population as only males between the ages of 18 and 50 could participate. Women, blacks, both free and enslaved, boys under the age of 18 and men over the age of 50, as well as holders of four or more slaves, and millers and iron-workers, were all excluded from one of the few county-wide institutions. For these segments of the population, there existed no other county-wide or often even local institution that allowed for such interactions or socialization on any regular basis, save one.

Part Two: The Denominations On The Frontier:

Kentucky's originating act included the provision for the one institution that would have been instituted county-wide. That institution was to be the county's parish.

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[78] Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 28.

[79]Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, 107–109.

[80]Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond, Va., 1941), 414-415.

Virginia since its' founding in the seventeenth century had an established church, the Church of England, commonly known as the Anglican Church or known more broadly as the Anglican Community. Kentucky as part of Virginia should have followed the pattern with its own parish.

The new territory, then part of Fincastle County, was to be incorporated into the wider parish of Botetourt until the passage of legislation in 1776 that would separate Kentucky into its own county.[81] The newly authorized legislation made this explicit, stating in the 1776 act '[that] whereas, from the great extent of the parish of Botetourt, the same is become very inconvenient to the inhabitants thereof, Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That… the said parish shall be divided into four distinct parishes...all that other part of the said parish which lies in the said county of Kentucky shall be one other distinct parish, and be called and known by the name of Kentucky.'[82]

The act importantly placed the geographical territory that constituted the newly formed Kentucky County within the confines of the newly created parish of Kentucky.[83] The legislation was important for the new territory. A Virginia parish was in part designed to work alongside as well as hand-in-hand with the local civil county administrations.[84] It was the role of the parish not only to pass on the Protestant faith, in the form of Anglicanism, but the parish was commissioned to act as the system of poor relief and social support for the county. It was through the offices of the parish and its vestry that the county took care of its own, the orphans and widows, as well as those who were unable to work or support themselves or their families of the county. The establishment of a parish would have led to the creation of a church and various chapels dispersed at appropriate distances around the county for the purposes of Sabbath worship. These places would have offered settlers fixed and permanent local focal points for communal gatherings. The church and chapels would also have been the one county-wide establishment that was by its nature all-inclusive as all settlers who had settled within the bounds of county would have by law been members of the one

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[81]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol IX, 1821, 261.

[82]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 261.

[83]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 261.

[84]For an in depth study on the relationship between church and State within colonial Virginia see: John K Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

congregation. Finally, the parish would have also seen the creation of a parish vestry and church court system for governance.[85]

By legislating for the creation of a county parish for Kentucky, the Virginia legislature intended to establish not just a parish for the county but more importantly the needed services and structures that constituted a functioning Anglican parish. The legislation as intended would have placed Kentucky within a larger framework of interlocking Anglican parishes. The wider Virginia community would have provided much of the needed associated religious supplies and clergy that the territory would have required. The parish would also have provided the framework from which a form of identity and community would have been formed. The church and associated chapels would have been natural focal points for settlers to gather while the vestry and church court system were, in the tradition of Virginia, meant to supplement and reinforce the concepts of a central government. As a Virginia institution, the parish was meant to have a meaningful and significant impact on nearly every settler's life.

Court records for the District of Kentucky from this period even suggest that the county's new government intended to found the required parish and even perhaps construct a parish church. Time and again the fines levied by the court were earmarked to the parish and its works. For example, a case brought forth to the court in November of 1775, the guilty party was required to pay a fine of a thousand pounds of tobacco to the parish of Kentucky.[86] Such funds would have allowed the formation of a functioning Anglican parish, with a vestry and poor relief, in the region.

The Anglican dominance of Kentucky though was to be short lived. The denomination's start on Kentucky's frontier may have begun in earnest at Boonesboro in May of 1775 with Henderson's scoundrels, but this was to be a false start for the denomination. It took the lay Anglican community itself within Kentucky nearly two decades after it was implemented in law to form the denomination's first functioning society in 1794. The community would take another fourteen years, until 1809, before it established either its first congregation or formed a working vestry.[87] The reason for this

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[85]Nelson, *A Blessed Company,* 17-33.

[86]Nov 1785, District of Kentucky Court records,(microfilm), Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KDLA).

[87]August 1809, Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm] UKSC.

failure was the legislation that should have seen the Anglican faith become the county's official denomination was only ever implemented in name alone. One significant reason for this was the impact that the American Revolution had upon Virginia. In 1777 Thomas Jefferson, then one of Virginia's delegates to the Continental Congress, began to rework many of Virginia's laws in order to remove vestiges of Britain's colonial hold on the state. By 1779 Jefferson was ready to introduce a bill to the assembly to disestablish one of the most visible symbols of British power, the Anglican Church.[88] Such a step may have been seen as rather too radical for many in the Assembly, as debates on the bill lasted until after the end of the war. A major reason for the hesitance of the assembly towards disestablishment was while it would have removed an important symbol of British power, it also would have removed an important social and communal institution that both governed and bound the population together. Ultimately, it would take till 1786 before Jefferson's bill, later known as Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, was passed by the Assembly. The statute granted freedom to all religious denominations, including Roman Catholics and Jews. In the background of these debates there was little support for developing an established Anglican Church infrastructure in Virginia.

Such delays by Kentucky's Anglican community resulted in a territory that, though legislated to be Anglican by the Virginia Assembly, would quickly become religiously heterogeneous in nature. Indeed, Kentucky's religious development would follow a path more closely found in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island than the older settled parts of Virginia, as Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist ministers and laity quickly moved into the territory.[89] Nor did these denominations need much encouragement or waste time either as they did so. Within a couple of years after Lythe's first service, these three denominations had established ministers and, in many cases, congregations throughout Kentucky. The Baptists, for example, arrived in 1776 with two ministers, The Revs Thomas Tinsley and William Hickman, while both the Methodist and Presbyterians arrived a few years later in the early days of the 1780's. A Methodist circuit for Kentucky along with the appointment of two circuit riders, James

[88]Gordon S Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 585–588.

[89]Virginia's backcountry was unlike the older settled parts of the state relatively religiously heterogeneous in nature. It was in these backcountry counties, which Kentucky was later created from, that the population was as likely to be Presbyterian or Baptist as it was to be Anglican.

Haw and Benjamin Ogden, was established in 1782. The Presbyterians arrived a year later in 1783 when the Rev. David Rice with the permission of the Hanover Presbytery settled in the territory for the first time.[90]

As the population of Kentucky began to grow quickly from the handful of early settlers found at Booneboro and a few other stations in 1775 to over 220,000 by 1800, so too did the numbers of dissenting Protestants.[91] The failure by the Anglican community to fully or properly coalesce was a major reason these denominations were able to establish themselves so early in Kentucky's history.

Church records from these early years, though often incomplete, can provide rough numbers of membership for several of the larger denominations with some accuracy. If these are taken and compared to the known population of Kentucky for 1790, a rough calculation of the percentage of the population who were religiously observant can be established. Between the five largest denominations, there were roughly around 6,605 members in 1790. With an already established population for Kentucky at 73,000 in 1790, the percentage of those who were members of any of the denominations can be roughly established at 9% of the overall population. Two decades later in the 1810's, the percentage increased significantly at a time when the state's population increased from 73,000 to 220,000. A study of the same sources as those for 1790's found roughly 32,477 individuals who belonged to the same denominations in the1810s. Religious adherents increased by a little over 25,000 over the two decades equated to a growth from the 9% in 1790 to 14.7% in the 1810s.[92] The data used here

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[90]Robert Hamilton Bishop, *An outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Durring a period of fourty years: Containing the memoirs of Rev. Daivd Rice and Sketches of the origin and present state of particular churches: and of the lives and labours of a number of men who were eminent and useful in their day. (*Lexington: Thomas T.Skilman, 1824), 68.

[91]Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 2 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 259; Historical Census Browser. Retrieved [Date you accessed source], from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/.

[92]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections, Louisville Kentucky; Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records KHS; Bryant's Station records KHS;Licking Association Records 1810-1901; Minutes of the Methodist General conference 1780-1810; Transylvania Presbytery Records 1786-1810 UKSC; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 416–490; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 18–35; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 21–54; William Warren Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publishers, 1946), 53–73; Methodist Episcopal Church. Conferences. Western and William Warren Sweet, *The Rise of*

was compiled from a variety of sources starting where possible with data from individual associations, presbyteries, and synods. These organisations provided the starting point for much of this information. This data was checked against individual congregational data when it was available. For example, the data derived from the Elkhorn Association was checked against that of several of its associated congregations such as Bryant's Station for both accuracy and confirmation of the numbers provided. Added to these sources were secondary sources such as William Warren Sweet's three volumes on *Religion on the American Frontier* or Lewis Collins' first volume on *Historical Sketches of Kentucky* which filled in missing data such as those on smaller denominations such as Catholics, or Lutherans. In total these sources, taken as a whole, offer important, though limited, insight into the religious make-up of Kentucky during these years.[93]

These numbers give the impression of quick, sustained growth; of large congregations each with their own minister and of physical church buildings dotted around the territory. For the numbers suggest that for every ten settlers one or two belonged to a religious community. Letters and accounts from ministers and the laity alike seem to add support to this idea. The Rev. David Rice, the father of Presbyterianism in Kentucky, wrote of receiving 'a call, subscribed by three hundred men' in 1783.[94] The Rev. Francis Asbury's journal writings were similarly replete with references to travelling from one house to another, often preaching and ministering to large numbers, as he made his way through Virginia and Kentucky in the 1780's and 90's. Accounts of the revivals that would spread through Kentucky in the early years of 1800's, often spoke of hundreds to thousands attending.[95] The laity also added their own

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Methodism in the West ; Being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811 (Nashville, Dallas : Smith & Lamar; New York, Cincinnati The Methodist book concern, 1920.

[93]Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 416–490; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 18–35; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 21–54; William Warren Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publishers, 1946), 53–73; Methodist Episcopal Church. Conferences. Western and William Warren Sweet, *The Rise of Methodism in the West ; Being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811* (Nashville, Dallas : Smith & Lamar; New York, Cincinnati The Methodist book concern, 1920.

[94]Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 67.

[95]Richard McNemar, Shakers, and Springfield (Ohio) presbytery, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God, in the Western States of America,*

thoughts in letters to family and friends back home. In one, a settler writing to her brother in the early part of the 1800's wrote often on the topic of religious observances and family obligation.[96] Speaking of herself, the author of the letter wrote 'It has been a long time since I last went to church...I know it is my duty to attend every sabbath [sic].'[97] The author clarified further that it was only through illness that she had lapsed in her religious obligations. She then moved the conversation on to the state of others souls writing, 'I was much grieved to hear that your wife had not yet joined the church for she is one of my most dear friends.'[98] She further stated, 'that I will see the glad tidings pened [sic] on paper that she has taken the only road to happiness.'[99] Such sources paint a picture of a surprising depth of religious conviction in the territory. In the latter years of the nineteenth century, this may have been the case. Yet during the earliest years of the territory, the reality for many denominations and for many congregations this was not yet a true. Nor was it a guarantee.

The Rev. David Rice may have recorded receiving a call from three hundred men for his services, but he quickly came to realize that his call would not be an easy one. Rice declared of those whom he met, 'I found scarcely one man and but a few women who supported a credible profession of religion. Some were grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion. Some were given to quarrelling and fighting, some to profane swearing, [and] some to intemperance.'[100] The state of religion in the region was, in Rice's estimation, dire. Rice's entry suggests that while many wanted religion and faith, few of Kentucky's inhabitants knew precisely what that entailed. Rice's comment suggests that many of these individuals did not fully comprehend the

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Agreeably to Scripture Promises, and Prophecies Concerning the Latter Day: With a Brief Account of the Entrance and Progress of What the World Call Shakerism, among other Subjects of the Late Revival in Ohio and Kentucky. Presented to the True Zion-Traveller, as a Memorial of the Wilderness Journey. (Lexington, KY: Michael D. Fortner, 2012).

[96]Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

[97]Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

[98]Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

[99]Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

[100]Bishop, *An outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the memoirs of Rev. David Rice.*, 68.

obligations associated with membership to a congregation. Obligations such as being physically present for worship, fulfilling acts of Christian charity, or the requirement to live a Christian life. Rice was not alone in this opinion either. Richard Henderson, though not a minister, while describing many of the settlers as scoundrels, also added that many also 'scarcely believed in God or feared the devil.'[101] Ministers such as Rice saw a daunting task laid before them. Rice's own words describe his state of being as 'sunk pretty low, verging on a deep melancholy.'[102] The option of turning back to the more settled lands of Virginia and the eastern seaboard must have been appealing, yet these ministers, and the ones who came after them, followed the tradition of their spiritual fathers and grandfathers and dug in and stood their ground. Indeed, the failure of the Anglicans to secure a minister for much of the period was surely one of the major reasons it was slow to either establish itself or expand. The denomination had, after Lythe left, been unable to attract suitable individuals to the post for several years and was left waiting for a minister until the end of the century.[103]

Ministers like the Rev. Rice often saw only one option before them if they were not to abandon their newly found pulpits. Rice, for example, chose instead for the first year of his ministry to limit his activity to preaching alone. Rice did not make this decision lightly arguing that those who had settled were not ready for the 'sealing ordnances' of membership.[104] Indeed, Rice argued that many of those who were seeking membership were doing so not out of a deeply held belief to Presbyterian theology, but instead as a chance to find a form of community that was lacking. The result for Rice was to see him travelling throughout the backcountry visiting his dispersed flock hoping to instil Presbyterian ideals.[105] At the end of his first year, Rice felt confident enough to establish a formal congregation of Presbyterians. However, the distances between

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[101]Colonel Richard Henderson, "Journal of an Expedition to Kentucky in 1775", Saturday May 13th , DM1cc21-105, 26cc- 76-77.

[102]Bishop, *An outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the memoirs of Rev. David Rice.*, 69-70.

[103]Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1, 437–444.

[104]Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68.

[105]There is a posting in the Kentucky Gazette from this period which states that Rice lost his horse. If he had been stationary during this period the loss of the horse and a reward for its return would not have been as important. The advertisement strongly suggests that he was both mobile and that he travelled a great deal.

settlements and the dispersed nature of Kentucky settlement required Rice to establish not one central congregation but three separate places of worship at Danville, Cane-Run, and Forks of Dick River. No records survive of how many individuals made up each of these three congregations, but records from other sources and other denominations suggest that they would have consisted of only a handful of families at the start.[106]

One of the most complete and best surviving sources of information on Kentucky's early congregations can be found in the records of the Elkhorn Baptist Association. The records of the association start in 1785 yet it was another three years before the association started to keep detailed numbers for each congregation.[107] In that year, the association recorded that within its eleven congregations there were 559 members.[108] This suggests that there was a mean congregation size of 50.81 individuals per congregation. Averages though are often misleading and should be read in context. In this case, nearly sixty percent of the association's population, 337 members, were part of only three congregations, South Elkhorn at 128 members, Clear Creek with 148, and Bryant's Station with 97. Of the other eight congregations the typical size of a congregation was in reality much smaller, at around 27.75 individuals per congregation. Such numbers suggest that the typical congregation during this period was often limited in size.[109]

Accounts and records from other sources confirm that the typical congregation was often small, with only a handful of members, many of whom would have been related, and which often grew slowly. Bryant's Station, for example, though large by 1788 had started as a very small congregation.[110] The congregation was founded two years earlier, in 1786, during the earliest days of settlement. The founding records for the nascent congregation show that initially there were only eight individuals joining

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[106]Rice had been sent to Kentucky by the Hanover Presbytery in Virginia as a minister without a post. Much of Rice's work during this period can be understood as Rice acting as more broadly as a missionary than that of a settled minister. Concerned more with instilling the basic tenets of Presbyterianism Rice, and ministers who followed kept few records. Indeed it would be after the establishment of the Transylvania Presbytery a few years later in 1786 before any serious or consistent records would be kept.

[107]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections, Louisville Kentucky [here after SBTSSC].

[108]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, May 1788, SBTSSC.

[109]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1786-1788, SBTSSC.

[110]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 15th April 1786, December 1788, KHS.

together to form the church's first congregation.[111] However, the congregation would nearly double in size over its first two years growing to forty members by the end of its first year, 1786, and to 97 members by 1788.[112] While this may be seen as phenomenal growth, over a four-fold increase in membership over the first year and doubling the following year, an examination of the Licking Association records book, the association that Bryant's Station both helped to found and belonged to, show that two decades later in 1810, the membership of the church had only grown to two-hundred and nine individuals.[113] This growth equated to an average increase of only around 8.7 members a year. Of the eleven other congregations that belonged to the Licking Association more than half, seven, had congregations consisting of less than fifty individuals each.[114]

Nor were small congregations and slow growth only a feature of the Baptist denomination. The Episcopalian congregation of Christ Church once founded was equally slow to develop. An examination of the record book kept by the congregation from its foundation in 1808, provides a clear picture of the congregation's slow start. The opening entry of the church's record book, dated August 25, 1808, found twenty-seven individuals who were willing to form a congregation, and importantly support it financially.[115] The entry stated that the twenty-seven were 'oblige[d]… to pay an equal proportion of the expense of erecting pews in the Episcopal church' along with 'an proportion of two hundred dollars annual' for the salary of a minister.[116] An entry for the 1st April 1809 found twenty-two were either still willing or able to support the congregation through paying rental fees on church pews.[117] Though a complete list of members for Christ Church does not exist, these pew rental lists can be used to determine the growth of the parish over the years. These lists, it must be mentioned, can never properly provide the full breadth of membership in the congregation; however,

[111]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 15th April 1786, KHS.

[112]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 5th August 1786- 27th October1788 SBTSSC.

[113]Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1810, KHS.

[114]Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1810, KHS.

[115]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 25th August 1808,UKSC.

[116]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 25th August 1808,UKSC.

[117]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 1st April 1809, UKSC.

they still are of value. As stated, the first few years after Christ Church's founding the congregation had some twenty-two individuals paying both pew-rental fees and a portion of the minister's two hundred dollar salary. Eleven years later in 1820 the number of pew-rentals had risen to sixty-one.[118] This equated to an annual increase of roughly 3.5 new pew renters a year.

Sources from church registries, record books, and ministers' journals from across the spectrum of Protestant denominations, from the Baptist to Episcopalians and from Presbyterian to Methodist, suggests a picture of small congregations with slow growth during the early days of Kentucky settlement. They point to a religious frontier in Kentucky that had not developed properly, with few of the multitude of congregations founded during this period ever larger than a hundred individuals. At this early stage in the development of the state, there were few social and political institutions and even religious denominations existed only in small and dispersed congregations. However, over the next two decades these congregations would play a vital role in creating a cohesive society in Kentucky.

Conclusion:

Salvus animarum, the salvation of souls, was and is the main purpose of any denomination. Kentucky's denominations in the late eighteenth century were no different in this regard. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or even Anglican, regardless of theological differences or hierarchical structures, all held that ideal as their founding principle. Kentucky's frontier made this task difficult to say the least for the denominations and their ministers.

The failure to fully and properly enact the 1776 legislation establishing Kentucky's parish left the territory with little social or communal systems of support. The nature of Kentucky's settlement did little to help either. Settlement patterns resulted in a population that once arrived, often dispersed over the vast territory often to either stations or family farms. Such settlement further often placed these settlers outside the bounds of common institutions of community. If the denominations were to grow and to fulfil their mission of saving souls they needed these systems in place.

Local and regional authorities though were more often than not focused on other issues. From nearly the start of colonization and settlement until 1792, much of

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[118] Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 1st December 1820, UKSC.

Kentucky's political class and other elites focused on the questions of separation and statehood and little else. For the wider Virginia Assembly during much of the same period focused on issues related to both defence and the conduct of a wider war against Great Britain and later the founding of a new nation. Few of these political or social elite likely ever gave the Kentucky frontier much thought. Nor were they ever likely to consider the unique problems raised by issues of settlement that faced ordinary settlers, let alone the denominations.

Each denomination soon came to realize that they would need to provide those systems that settlers required, becoming in turn both centres of community and providers of society. If the denominations were to succeed though they would have to depend on their own abilities, skills, and other assets alone to do so. At its first meeting in October 1786, for example, the Transylvania Presbytery quickly passed a Synod recommendation that 'all vacant congregations under their care to meet together every Lord's day at one or more places for the purpose of prayer and praise and the reading the holy Scriptures together with the works of such approved divines as they may be able to procure...; the Presbytery does approve and recommend the same to all vacant churches under its care.'[119] The Synod's recommendation was an important one for Kentucky's Presbyterians. The ability to offer a Sabbath service regardless of the presence of a minister meant congregations could meet regularly. Such services, although religious at heart, were much more for many settlers. For such settlers, these services were often the only chance they had to interact with others while stepping away from the hardships of life on the frontier for even a short time.

The Presbyterian acceptance of the Synod's recommendation was an important first step for the denomination. If they and the other denominations within Kentucky were to fulfil their mission of saving souls, they needed settlers to join. Though an important first step, the ability to conduct religious services regardless of the presence of a minister had only a minimal impact, affecting only those individuals who were already part of a congregation.

When settlers arrived in Kentucky they were separated from their families and homes in the east. Early Kentucky was isolated and distinct from much of early American society. Even the early denominations in Kentucky struggled to establish themselves in the wake of the Revolutionary War and the Virginia Statute of Religious

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119 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860, October 17th 1786, [microfilm] UKSC.

Freedom. With no established church in Kentucky, and no formal state support for religion of any kind, Kentucky was in many ways a new experiment. As a result, the different denominations struggled to provide for the social and spiritual needs of the early settlers of Kentucky. Struggling even to establish a foothold across the Appalachians, the denominations would slowly expand in the west at the end of the eighteenth century.

That struggle was much of the result of Kentucky itself. Kentucky, it was true, was isolated from the much of the rest of the republic during these years. As a consequence, those who chose to settle in Kentucky often felt isolated and alone. Those twin feelings began at the start of the process as well, requiring the pioneer to choose between two difficult routes into the territory. The overland route was the more common of the two, often because it was also more affordable requiring only the willingness to walk the 195 mile route. Whilst the river route, though more expensive, required little more than allowing the currents to carry you to your destination. Either route chosen though was in itself an isolating event. Those who chose the land route were separated by 195 miles of wilderness with no man-made structures or access to support from the moment they started. The route itself was often confusing whilst the forest hid a thousand dangers from wild animals, to Indian attacks with every mile covered. The river route was little better in this regard. Once embarked and headed down river there was little chance of turning back. The boat became a world onto itself, open to elements whilst also isolating those on board from the rest of the world whilst it followed the currents downstream. Once arrived, the feeling of isolation and aloneness continued as settlers often spent the first few years living in stations and forts close to their farms yet with little else around. To this situation civil authorities did little to help, often creating only basic institutions of governance. Such institutions did little to encourage or develop community outside the few largest settlements. The result was to leave settlers to seek their own community and alternative institutions of support. The denominations were often the most visible and practicable institution to offer such community and belonging.

The following chapters will examine how these denominations began the process of gaining members and the systems they developed to keep their members becoming providers of community and creators of a wider society for the new territory for many settlers. The next chapter will take up the discussion of how the denominations began to engage the wider settler community. Specifically, it will

examine how denominations used camp meetings as both a religious event but more importantly as a way to engage those individuals who might not have ever belonged to a congregation at all.

Chapter Two

Kentucky's Camp Meetings.

Kentucky was isolated physically from much of the rest of the republic during the earliest years of settlement. That isolation resulted from only two significant routes into the territory, the 195 mile land route through the Cumberland Gap, or down the Ohio River. In its own way, each route required settlers to undertake significant hardships in order to reach their new homes. Such hardships often resulted in many of those who migrated feeling isolated and alone from the start. Once settlers arrived they were faced with a frontier that had little to offer beyond its land. Civil authorities created only the most basic government infrastructures and were little concerned with the creation of community. Added to this, the nature of Kentucky's settlement, that saw settlers choosing to live within family stations and forts over more secure towns, left many to seek their own community wherever they could. That search would ultimately turn settlers to their local congregation. For many of those settlers their first interaction with congregations came not at a Sabbath services but within the framework of camp meetings.

Daniel Drake wrote of his first experience of a Kentucky camp meeting: 'Their camp meetings in the woods, which I sometimes attended, presented scenes of fanatical raving among the worshippers, and of the levity and vice among [them].'[1] While the Rev. Barton Stone described such meetings as 'new, and passingly strange.'[2] It was with these words that both Drake and Stone succinctly summed up what camp meetings truly were to the typical settler. These meetings were both social gatherings and religious events. They were founded by, and for, specific congregations yet they were open to all. In short, camp meetings were initially small, local, and communal gatherings in the lives of settlers.

Kentucky's camp meetings began within the first generation of settlement. Though sources for much of the period are sketchy, rarely complete, or have been lost through the years, the sources that do exist, suggest that camp meetings were occurring

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[1] Daniel Drake and Charles D. (Charles Daniel) Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky : A Series of Reminiscential Letters from Daniel Drake, M.D., to His Children* (Cincinnati : Robert Clarke & Co., 1870), 195.

[2] Barton W. Stone and John Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone* (Cincinnati : Published for the author by J.A. & U.P. James, 1847), 34.

as early as 1797.[3] The Revs. James McGready and Richard McNemar, both contemporaries and ministers within Kentucky, recalled camp meetings at the Gasper and Red Rivers in Logan County occurring in the summer of 1797. Indeed, although no complete list of camp meetings has ever been compiled, accounts by McGready and others suggest that camp meetings were already a relatively common occurrence some time before the events of Cane Ridge in August of 1801. The Rev. McGready, for example, was known to have been part of, or to have led, some twenty-six or twenty-seven camp meetings between 1797 and 1801.[4] Indeed, at the height of these events, McGready and others held camp meetings on a near monthly basis and over a wide area. Few historians have examined these smaller meetings in any detail. Indeed a majority of historians, for example Ellen Eslinger, Paul Conkin, and John Boles, have focused instead on the larger meetings such as Cane Ridge. Yet these smaller meetings were more common and, especially in the early years occurred regularly, nearly monthly, and more often than the larger more widely known meetings that would follow.

	Date of Camp Meeting:	Number of Days:	Ministers Present:	Denominations Present:	Attendance:	Conversion Numbers:
1	May 1797		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		10 individuals
2	July 1797		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	Much of the Congregation	
3	September 1798		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	Much of the Congregation	
4	July 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
5	August 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	All of the Congregation	
6	September 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		

[3]Richard McNemar, Shakers, and Springfield (Ohio) presbytery, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God, in the Western States of America, Agreeably to Scripture Promises, and Prophecies Concerning the Latter Day: With a Brief Account of the Entrance and Progress of What the World Call Shakerism, among The Subjects of the Late Revival in Ohio and Kentucky. Presented to the True Zion-Traveller, as a Memorial of the Wilderness Journey.* (Lexington, KY: Michael D. Fortner, 2012), 19; James McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready, Late Minister of the Gospel in Henderson, Ky. ...*(Nashville, Tenn. : Printed and Published at J. Smith's Steam Press, 1837), VII – VIII.

[4]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*; Christopher Waldrep, 'The Making of a Border State Society: James McGready, the Great Revival, and the Prosecution of Profanity in Kentucky', *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 3 (1 June 1994): 767–84; McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*.

7	June 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	The multitudes	
8	July 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	From as far away as 100 miles	
9	--- 1800			Presbyterian		
10	--- 1800			Presbyterian		
11	--- 1800		William McKendree	Methodist's		
12	August 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		50 Individuals
13	September 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		45 Individuals
14	September 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 70 people	
15	October 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 40 people	
16	October 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		8 Individuals
17	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		12 Individuals
18	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	40 individuals	
19	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 20 people	
20	April 1801		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
21	May 1801	4 days and 3 nights	James McNemar		Cabin Creek, Cane Ridge, Concord, Eagle Creek	20 Individuals
22	May/June 1801	5 days and 4 nights	James McNemar	Presbyterian	4,000 people	
23	June 1801	4 days and 3 nights	7 Minister's	Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist	A small number	
24	June/July 1801			Presbyterian		
25	July 1801	5 days and nights	James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
26	August 1801	About one week	Stone, McNemar, McGreedy, Crawford	Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist	Between 10,000 and 20,000 people	

Table 1: Camp meetings.[5]

[5]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready,* vii- xi; McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God,* x-xi;

It cannot be denied that camp meetings within Kentucky were fundamentally religious events. Eslinger places Kentucky's camp meetings within a wider tradition of 'Presbyterian revivalism' dating back to the Reformation of Scotland in the sixteenth century. Indeed, much of Eslinger's work is focussed on the religious influence and impact camp meetings had on Kentucky's wider religious environment.[6] Eslinger, in particular, examines camp meetings as adapting and building upon older 'sacramental occasions' and developing more inclusive religious events.[7] Paul Conkin follows similar arguments through the use of the events of Cane Ridge in August of 1801.[8] Conkin focuses much of his study on the religious aspects and events of Cane Ridge linking these to older traditions within American religious life.[9] These studies of Kentucky's camp meetings limit their scope to the religious impact of the camp meetings. Yet, for Kentucky and other parts of the backcountry, camp meetings took on a much more important and indeed significant role. Beyond the few institutions, often directly established in law, specifically in the case of Kentucky, the county court system and the county militia, often these territories lacked the most basic of social institutions. These camp meetings took the congregations out of the normal setting for Sabbath services and into the backcountry community, and importantly, brought those individuals outside either the congregation, or more significantly one of the few institutions of community, into direct contact with the denominations. In some cases for the first time. The fundamental mission of each denomination may not have been directly to create or provide community and society for Kentucky's settlers, yet each denomination realized that creating such systems of support would allow them to more effectively reach a majority of Kentucky's settlers. One of the major tools used for social gatherings were camp meetings.

Camp meetings brought individuals together, transcending the denominational

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Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : vol. 1,* 434; Methodist Magazine, 1821, p. 189; Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States: From the First Settlement Down to the Present Time* (Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 369.

[6]Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 187, 212.

[7] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 226.

[8] Paul Keith Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

[9]Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost,*164, 26–63.

bonds that existed and engaged settlers. This all occurred during a period when, outside the few established towns such as Lexington, Harrodsburg, or Louisville, Kentucky lacked either the much needed public institutions or the social events that could be found throughout other more settled areas of the young republic.

This chapter will focus on Kentucky and its camp meetings. It will show through accounts, records, journals, and other sources, how and why camp meetings played an important role within Kentucky, and how the denominations used these meetings to create community, which bound strangers and individual families into a wider society. This chapter will begin by offering a new definition for Kentucky's camp meetings. It will argue that the commonly understood association between revivals and camp meetings by previous historians such as Eslinger, Boles, and Conkin is inappropriate when discussing Kentucky. To that end this chapter will argue that while the camp meetings were intrinsically religious events, the development and patterns of establishment of Kentucky's congregations must preclude defining these events strictly as 'revivals'. After establishing a new definition of camp meetings this chapter will in turn examine the importance of these meetings for Kentucky. Camp meetings were important because of their role as small, local, and communal events in the lives of settlers. By being small, local, and communal, camp meetings became a way for congregations to engage and interact with those settlers who may not have crossed the threshold of a church or participated in Sabbath services. In short Kentucky's camp meetings became an important tool for denominations to introduce settlers to the local congregations. Camp meetings were also often the first step to bringing a sense of broader community and society to an area. Only after settlers started to engage the denominations were they able to start the process of ordering and organizing communities and developing Kentucky's society.

Camp Meetings; A New Definition:

Within the historiography of camp meetings there exists little published work or discussion on what camp meetings truly were. Many historians, including Ellen Eslinger, Paul Conkin, Paul Johnson, and even one of the field's leading scholars, Sydney Ahlstrom, either directly link or closely associate camp meetings with that of revivals.[10] Eslinger associates the terms camp meeting and revival within the very

[10] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion;* Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost*; Paul E. Johnson, *A*

subtitle of her work on Kentucky's religious movements calling the book *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism.* These historians, and others, substitute definitions of revival for those of camp meetings, and in many cases, the association would seem warranted. Camp meetings in many parts of North America were the physical manifestations of wider religious revivals. Indeed, the association between the two can be found in the historiography of the first Great Awakening which has been viewed by many historians as a reawakening, a reviving and in many cases a restoration of the already established religious beliefs of communities.[11] A study of America's First Great Awakening can be of use in understanding what camp meetings were within Kentucky. This study will show that within the first Great Awakening, revivals were, in fact, the rebirth of older established religious belief within congregations that were decades, and in many cases, generations old. The link between revival and the meetings that occurred during the first Great Awakening is logical but that link does not work within the context of Kentucky during the second Great Awakening.

The origins of the Great Awakening were located within the Congregational churches of New England and, in particular, the congregation of Northampton under the Rev. Jonathan Edwards.[12] As news of the events spread, to the surrounding towns of Massachusetts, so did the revival, travelling further afield as ministers took up the call. By the end of this first Great Awakening many of the major cities and towns of the colonies, from the New England colonies of the North, and as far south as Georgia, had experienced their own revivals. The experiences of the First Great Awakening confirm the definition of revival as reinvigorating *existing* churches and indeed confirmed the link between revivals and camp meetings during the first Great Awakening. In many cases, ministers such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and James Davenport used camp meetings as an important tool of their trade, holding religious services outside the physical confines of parish churches. They did this for one of two reasons,

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Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004); Gordon S Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004).

[11] 'revival, n.'. OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164908?redirectedFrom=revival (accessed March 06, 2014).

[12] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 282.

either to engage more of the public or because the sheer numbers of attendees outgrew the size of most church buildings. In both cases, camp meetings cannot be fully understood outside the definition of revivals. Indeed, to do so would seem counter-intuitive and so the definition of revival could and should in such cases be used in the context of camp meetings. In this context, defined both as a reawakening of religious fervour or of a particular denomination.[13] At the root of this definition is a dependency on a pre-existing religious community or communities that had fallen dormant. The religious movements of the 1730's and 40's were occurring within pre-established communities.

This raises some important problems, especially for backcountry communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Here the link between camp meetings and revivals is at best tentative. In the case of the backcountry, in Kentucky in particular, these communities more often than not, had yet to be established, let alone having existed long enough to have fallen dormant. Many of the earliest congregations within Kentucky had been established for less than twenty years before the Cane Ridge meeting in 1801. The Rev. David Rice, for example, recorded that he established congregations at Danville, Cane Run and Forks of Dicks River no earlier than 1784/85.[14] The Transylvania Presbytery, the institution that governed much of the Kentucky's Presbyterian population, was founded a year later in 1786.[15] Many of the region's oldest Baptist congregations were of the same age, with the Bryant's Station congregation having been established in the same year as the Transylvania Presbytery, other congregations such as East Hickman was established a year later, and Mayslick the following year.[16] Finally, the Episcopalians as a society would only begin to take root in the mid-1790's, a handful of years before Cane Ridge.[17] These were some of the

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[13] 'revival, n.'. OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164908?redirectedFrom=revival (accessed March 06, 2014).

[14]Robert Hamilton Bishop and David Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men Who Were Eminent and Useful in Their Day* (T. T. Skillman, 1824), 69.

[15]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], 17th October 1786, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

[16]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, Historical Society Special Collections, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KHS); East Hickman Baptist Church Fayette County Ky Records June 15 1787 - Sept 1842,UKSC; United Baptist Church of Jesus Christ Records (Mayslick Ky) 1788-1947, UKSC.

[17]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm],

oldest congregations and governing bodies within Kentucky yet their histories were less than a generation old. Indeed, the transient nature of Kentucky's settlement would suggest that many of these congregations' members were much newer. For example over a thirteen year period from 1788 to 1801, the Baptists' Elkhorn Association grew from 559 members to 4853 members, this equated to an addition of around 330 members a year.[18] Some of those earliest settlers would have moved west as new opportunities opened up, resulting in a significant upheaval of membership numbers during this period. Similarly, the Methodist denomination in Kentucky over a comparable period, 1787 to 1800, grew from 90 individuals to around 1740; a yearly increase of 137.5 members a year.[19] Only the movement of settlers into the territory during this period can explain such significant increases in membership.

The Rev. Lythe and his first service at Boonesboro in May of 1775 are unmistakable examples of this and though he was the first, he was not alone.[20] Gathered among that first group of settlers was the brother of Daniel Boone, Squire Boone.[21] When the name of 'Boone' is mentioned in relation to early Kentucky, the image that is invoked is one of the rough frontiersman and fighter. However, though there is minimal evidence that Squire engaged in active ministry during his time in Kentucky, he was nonetheless a Baptist minister in his own right. The following year, 1776, saw the arrival of two other Baptist ministers, Thomas Tinsley and William Hickman.[22] These ministers would be followed by other notable individuals, including in 1783, the Methodist ministers James Haw and Benjamin Ogden, and in 1786 the Presbyterian

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UKSC.

[18]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, October 1788 to August 1801, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections, Louisville Kentucky.

[19]Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.* (New York : Carlton & Porter, 1796); William Warren Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publishers, 1946); Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 432,445–446.

[20]Richard Henderson, '*Journal of Trip to Boonesborough,'* Draper Manuscript Collection DM1CC21-105(here after DM) Lyman Copeland Draper and State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Kentucky papers*, The Draper Manuscript ([Madison, Wis.]: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey [distributor]).

[21]Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptist from 1769 to 1885,* 11.

[22]William Hickman, *William Hickman A short Account of my life and Travels For more than fifty years a Professed servant of Jesus Christ,* KHS.

minister David Rice.[23]

Kentucky's denominations followed closely on the heels of the first settlers to the territory. They took root not at the crossroads between the young settlements, as occurred in Virginia, but instead they were located within the heart of the settlements themselves. Rhys Issac has argued that within Virginia, churches were 'dispersed at the most frequent intervals in the countryside...often st[anding] alone in a cleared area near some crossroads at the centre of its parish precinct.'[24] Within the Anglican dominated colony of Virginia, churches became a centre of community. Their location at crossroads and in cleared areas near the centre of their parish boundaries made both the physical structure of the church, and the religious services they provided, important. Virginia had no large centres of population; instead the countryside was dotted with large plantations, with church services and vestry providing both to the spiritual and social needs, from poor relief to a sense of belonging, for the dispersed population.

Kentucky's religious denominations held a similar role during the early days. David Rice recorded in his memories that he established 'three places of worship, which were known by the names of Danville, Cane-Run, and the Forks of Dick River' after receiving both a verbal call and written call 'subscribed by three hundred men.'[25] After Rice established each place of worship he spent much of the next few years travelling between each, to tend to the early Presbyterian settlers' spiritual needs. Rice was not unique in this form of backcountry ministry. A fellow Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Joseph Howe, kept a journal from the late 1790's through early 1800's which is replete with mentions of the various locations he travelled to in order to meet the spiritual needs of his flock. Much of Howe's writing follows along similar lines as his entire writing for the month of September 1791: 'Sat. 16 at Pleasant Point from Heb. 8.26 Friday 21. at the Little Mountain from Job. 23.3.4 Sat. 22. at Do [sic] from Malachi 1.9.'[26] Howe's journal reads as a list of the major settlements in Montgomery County. Nor were the

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[23]24th December 1782, *Records of the Methodist's General Conference;* Bishop, *An outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Durring a period of fourty years: Containing the memoirs of Rev. Daivd Rice,* 69, 6.

[24]Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 58.

[25]Bishop, *An outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the memoirs of Rev. David Rice,* 69, 67.

[26]Reverend Joseph Howe. *Diary, 1795-1816 [microfilm]: including marriages he performed.* Filson Historical Society Microfilm, 20.

Presbyterians alone in this style of ministry in Kentucky's early days.

The Rev. Francis Asbury recorded in 1790 preaching in various houses and 'dwelling-houses' as he travelled throughout Kentucky.[27] Indeed, in a closer study of Asbury's journal one finds no mention that he ever preached in a physical church structure. Instead he preached in the homes of the laity or as often under trees or in open fields. The lack of physical infrastructure resulted in Kentucky's Methodists holding their first conferences in a private dwelling, 'at brother Materson's, a very comfortable house, and kind people.'[28] The focus of that first conference's business was not the establishment and construction of a physical church structure, but instead of building of a school. The conference 'fixed a plan for a school and called it Bethel; and obtained a subscription of upwards of £300, in land and money, towards it[s] establishment.'[29] For these early Kentucky Methodists the need for churches was less pressing than the need for a school. Early Kentucky congregations were content to meet in private homes and the use of the house as a place of worship, following in the steps of the early Christians in Europe and Asia Minor in the early first century, was not seen as an issue.

The Baptist community had similar experiences to the Methodists. Bryant's Station Baptist Church is a useful example. The congregation at Bryant's Station was established 'on the Third Saturday of March' 1786, with eight members.[30] Though the congregation would grow over the next few years, their numbers would still remain relatively low. Throughout the congregation's minute book can be found few references to the congregation elders taking up the question of building any permanent church structure for the community. This suggests that the building of a meetinghouse was not of importance. Indeed the experiences of Bryant's Station were common among Baptist congregations of the time. Records kept for the Licking Association for 1810 found that, of the eleven churches that made up the association, only one, Tates Creek church, had a congregation of over a hundred members.[31] Most of the Association's member churches

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[27]Tuesday May 11 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From July 15, 1786 to November 6, 1800.* (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821)., 74.

[28]Tuesday May 11 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 74.

[29]Tuesday May 11 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 74.

[30] Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, KHS.

[31] Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1810, KHS.

averaged less than fifty members.[32] Smaller congregation sizes suggest a limited number of churches in existence. In short, it seems that the lack of a developed religious environment in these areas must preclude both the definition of revival and the associated link to that of camp meetings.

Removing this association makes defining and understanding camp meetings within a backcountry environment somewhat difficult. No longer can the historian rely on the shared and assumed definition that camp meetings were strictly re-awakenings, revivals, or restorations of religious beliefs and customs. The historian must then go back to the very beginning and examine camp meetings as something other than revivals in order to arrive at a functional definition for the backcountry environment.

Camp meetings found their start within Kentucky long before Cane Ridge and the Second Great Awakening. Though no complete lists have ever been compiled of those meetings, the accounts of several ministers all suggest that the first meeting of its kind occurred at least four years earlier; in the summer of 1797.[33] These were the camp meetings held at both Gasper and the Red River by the Rev. James McGready. Long before the Rev. Barton Stone and Cane Ridge rose to popularity and became linked by historians as the very definition of a camp meeting, McGready had been seen by his peers and fellow ministers as the founding father of the camp meetings.[34] Barton Stone, for instance, recalled attending one of McGready's camp meetings before the events at his own church of Cane Ridge in 1801 and was probably inspired by it to conduct his own meetings.[35] Of those events Stone later recalled ‘Having heard of a remarkable religious excitement in the south of Kentucky' by one of his fellow Presbyterian ministers James McGready.[36] Stone soon found himself in attendance of one of McGready's meetings in 1801. Writing of the experience, Stone recalled 'the multitudes came together, and continued a number of days and nights encamped on the ground; during which time worship was carried on in some part of the encampment. The scene

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[32]Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1810, KHS.

[33]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M’Gready*, VII; McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*, 19; Barton W. Stone and John Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone,* 34.

[34]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone,* 34.

[35]Stone and Rogers, The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, 34.

[36]Stone and Rogers, The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, 34.

to me was new, and passing strange. It baffled description.'[37] Stone's own account leaves little doubt to who he thought of as the Father of Kentucky's camp meeting, the Rev. James McGready. The logical place then to derive a new functional definition of what a Kentucky camp meeting was would be from a study of those conducted by McGready.

McGready was prolific with regards to camp meetings, holding around twenty-six meetings between the summer of 1797 and the autumn of 1800. Not only were there numerous meetings, but McGready did not confine himself to just one county, holding camp meetings in Logan, Harrison, Cumberland, Bourbon, and Mason counties.[38] The frequency of these meetings suggests that, for many settlers, these camp meetings were important not only for developing religious conviction, but also for providing a broader social experience. For many, they were part of a wider frontier experience. These meetings were events that occurred with some regularity, in many cases on a monthly basis, one that could be anticipated and looked forward to by settlers who often spent much of their days on small family farms isolated and alone.

These meetings varied in both size and duration. An examination of the more famous accounts of Cane Ridge, or any of the meetings that occurred during the 1801 season, can create a false understanding that camp meetings inevitably were large scale events with hundreds if not thousands in attendance, conducted over a period of a week or more. Yet, during this earlier period, a much smaller population attended the typical camp meeting. The camp meetings at Muddy River, Ridge Sacrament, Little Muddy Creek, and Montgomery Meetinghouse, all in the later part of 1800, were in many ways much more typical, with fewer than fifty individuals in attendance.[39] The size of these meetings, and their descriptions, suggest that individuals did not usually travel far to attend. These meetings were typically local events, pulling in individuals mainly from the surrounding area of the host congregation. Of the 26 camp meetings known to have occurred between 1797 and 1801, 84.6%, or 22 in total, were such small events. Indeed, only when such meetings became broader in scope and had much larger numbers of attendees did outside commentators begin to make mention of them. For example,

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[37]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone,* 34.

[38]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*; McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend James McGready*.

[39]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*; McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready.*

commentators noting the meeting at Gasper River in July 1800 made specific mention of followers arriving 'from as far away as 100 miles.'[40] A similar discussion of the Cabin Creek gathering, nearly a year later, in May of 1801 made repeated mentions of the involvement of four separate congregations (Cabin Creek, Cane Ridge, Concord, and Eagle Creek) at the meeting.[41] Finally, of the last two unique meetings, at Concord congregation in May and June of 1801 and at Cane Ridge in August of that year, commentators made mention of large gatherings of 4,000 and 10,000 to 20,000 followers respectively.[42] The often-silent nature of the other 22 meetings suggests that these four were unique because of their size, the distance followers travelled, and the number of congregations involved.

The frequency and size of such events is important in painting a picture of regular, local, and small events meant to function principally on a communal level. Indeed, descriptions of these events provide clear evidence of their communal and social nature. Descriptions of these camp meetings by Stone and others make reference specifically to the importance of such meetings being held in the open air. For example, Stone's description of his first camp meeting in Logan County made clear that while religious, 'worship was carried on in some part of the encampment' other sections of the camp were set up for communal living. [43] Such meetings were known to attract a diverse group of individuals with one settler, Charles Drake, recalling seeing young adults 'who hung about the camp.44 Finally, one settler wrote to family back in Philadelphia of the events of Cane Ridge, recording 'I first proceeded to count the

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[40]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*, IX; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 434.

[41]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*, 21, 23–24.

[42]Rev. John Lyle, *The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm]*, 8th August 1801, UKSC; Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman to his sister in Philadelphia,dated Lexington, Kentucky, August 10, 1801, in W.W. Woodward, *Increase of piety, or The revival of religion in the United States of America : containing several interesting letters not before published. Together with three remarkable dreams, in succession, as related by a female in the northern liberties of Philadelphia, to several Christian friends, and handed to the press by a respectable minister of the gospel* . (Philadelphia, PA.: WW Woodward, 1802), 52; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 610; McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*, IX.

[43]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 34.

[44]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 195.

wagons containing families, with their provisions, camp equipage, &c. to the number of 147: at 11 o'clock the quantity of ground occupied by horses, wagons, &c. was about the same size as the square between Market, Chestnut, Second and Third-streets, of Philadelphia.'[45] Such descriptions made clear that camping was an important aspect of these events for settlers. The importance of camping was, as historians such as Eslinger have put forth, in the communal nature of camping.[46] Camping placed all those who participated on the same level regardless of their social or economic status in the outside world. The poor tenant farmer became equal to the rich landowner who owned his farm or the well to do city merchant. The camping aspect of the camp meeting broke through social and economic boundaries of participants and allowed everyone to interact, if even for a short period, as social equals within the boundaries of the meeting. Camping fostered and reinforced ideas of community requiring those who attended to become fully invested in the experience.[47] The religious service was but one part of the event with the social nature of the meeting taking prominence beside it.

These descriptions of Kentucky's camp meetings would seem to suggest that they were much more than just part of a religious revival. McGready and others were conducting camp meetings with some regularity long before the generally recognized start of the Second Great Awakening in Kentucky. These meetings were social events as much as religious ones, occurring more often than not with smaller numbers pulled mainly from the surrounding area. They pulled neighbours from around the area together and gave them a chance to bond within a communal environment over several days.

New Form of Religious Service:

Camp meetings were much more than merely religious events within Kentucky. While camp meetings acted on a local and communal level, they were also responsible for creating a sense of community within the districts in which they were held. For many of Kentucky's settlers, the frontier was a place of isolation. Letters and accounts

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[45]Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman to his sister in Philadelphia,dated Lexington, Kentucky, August 10, 1801, in W.W. Woodward, *Increase of piety*, 52.

[46]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 226; John Ellis. "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn: Methodism as a Youth Movement in the Upper South and Ohio Valley, 1770–1820." *Ohio Valley History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 3-31.

[47]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 225-235.

of the period are replete with descriptions of the isolation settlers experienced.

Daniel Drake recalled living in a station on fourteen hundred acres with four other families, 'three Drakes and Shotwell and Morris' with the nearest town, Washington some 'eight miles away... on the Lexington road.'[48] Drake added that during much of this period: 'I well remember that Indian wars, midnight butcheries, captivities, and horse-stealing [sic], were the daily topics of conversation.'[49] Sarah Graham recounted stories of quarrels and arguments that broke out among those families who lived in her station out of the boredom many experienced.[50] Settlers inhabited a world that was also transitory in nature as people moved further and further over the horizon as new lands opened up. Though bemoaned by minister and laity alike, John Lyle for example recorded in his diary of a complaint toward the Rev. Stone for his refusal to 'command order and silence' from those at Cane Ridge, the chaotic nature of the camp meeting pulled these individuals out of their everyday lives of isolation and gave them a common starting point that was necessary if they were to be formed into a community.[51]

From McGready's very first camp meeting in Kentucky in the late 1790's, these religious events broke the standard model many had come to recognize for religious services. Whether this was intentional by McGready and those that followed, or a product of environment is debatable. There exists little reliable recorded reasoning for why these leaders chose to make a break with common formulas for religious services in the period. Though the standard formula for religious services varied from denomination to denomination, and in some cases even within a denomination, such as that of High and Low Church Anglicans, there were similarities. Services occurred on a weekly basis, on the denomination's established day for the Sabbath. These services typically followed a pattern of one or more readings from the denomination's accepted biblical canon, both from the Old and New Testaments, followed by a sermon based on the readings. Depending on the denomination in question, the congregation may have also participated in the singing of psalms, or other religiously based songs, as well. Finally, every so often, again based on the theology of the given denomination, the

[48]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 13.

[49]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 23.

[50]JDS Interview with Sarah Graham ca, 1840s, DM12CC46.

[51]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 8th August 1801, UKSC.

congregation was offered the chance to receive communion.[52]

In contrast, Kentucky's camp meetings rarely, if ever, followed any of these established patterns for Protestant religious services. Of the handful of camp meetings that we can trace in any sort of detail, most occurred over more than a single day, with many of these meetings occurring outside the traditionally set day for the Sabbath.[53] Whether this was intentional or not, as earlier stated, we cannot know. However, the placement of these meetings outside the traditional Sabbath day was important. It broke the established relationship of religious services with the Sabbath. No longer were the two synonymous in the minds of Kentucky's settlers. Removing the services from the day that was traditionally associated with religious worship allowed camp meetings to become much more than just another religious service. The break with tradition did not end here.

Ellis and others have argued that Protestant services of the period could be generally characterized as sombre and intellectual affairs.[54] Religious services placed their emphasis on biblical readings with the minister's sermon traditionally focused on an analysis of the given reading. The surviving journals from individuals such as William Hickman and David Barrow, (both Baptists,) and James Finley, (a Presbyterian,) bear this out, with frequent mention of scriptural passages as the starting point of their sermons.[55] Surviving sermons from individuals such as David Rice, (Presbyterian,) and Joseph Cabell Harrison (Baptist) provide even clearer evidence of this.[56] In one sermon alone on Saint Paul to the Hebrews 11:14-16, Harrison took direct quotes not only from the main passage but covered Paul's other letters as well as including a discourse on Abel, Noah, Abraham and Enoch.[57] Indeed, the sermon took a

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[52] Evidence of these patterns can be seen throughout the minutes and accounts kept by all major denominations within Kentucky.

[53] See appendix Camp-meeting.

[54] John Ellis. "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn: Methodism as a Youth Movement in the Upper South and Ohio Valley, 1770–1820." *Ohio Valley History* 10, no. 1 (2010),14.

[55] William Hickman, *William Hickman A short Account of my life and Travels For more than fifty years a Professed servant of Jesus Christ*, KHS; 10th May 1795,Transcript of David Barrow diary, 1795, SC931 KHS; James Bradley Finley and William Peter Strickland, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, Or, Pioneer Life in the West* (Printed at the Methodist Book Concern, for the author; R. P. Thompson, printer, 1855).

[56] David Rice, S*ermons*, UKSC; Joseph Cabell Harrison 1793-1860, S*ermons*, UKSC.

[57] Joseph Cabell Harrison 1793-1860, S*ermons*, UKSC.

meandering course through both the Old and New Testaments as Harrison spoke in some detail about the concepts of obedience and redemption.[58] The sermon was at its very core a literate and intellectual argument on the subjects of obedience to God and the redemption of one's soul. Although only a handful of Rice's sermons have survived, and of those only a few are fully legible, they were also constructed in much the same mould. What they show are sermons based on scriptural passages that are at their core literate and intellectual arguments.[59] For the typical settler, these sermons would have been difficult to comprehend and would have had little impact on how they viewed their own behaviour and their daily lives.

Yet, accounts of various camp meetings find that highly intellectual sermons such as these were rarely if ever used at these gatherings. Scriptural passages may have been quoted from time to time, yet the discourses often took on a more emotive role rather than an intellectual one. The Rev. John Lyle in his description of the Cane Ridge meeting suggested as much when he wrote of one sermon given by McNemar. Lyle stated that McNemar framed his sermon on Romans 1, yet much of the sermon was 'unintelligible to myself and others with whom I conversed about it.'[60] What makes Lyle's description so important is, as Eslinger points out, that Lyle, unlike McNemar, Stone, or others who published their accounts shortly after the events, was not writing for an outside audience, Lyle's journal and the descriptions therein, were for his own purposes and so often provided a less-partisan account of the events on hand.[61] Lyle's description suggests a change in the form of sermons from the intellectual affairs found prior to the camp meetings to a more emotive, passion-driven discourse used at the meetings. McNemar, as a trained and ordained Presbyterian, was quite capable of delivering the intellectual sermons so common of his denomination, yet Lyle's description of McNemar's 'unintelligible sermon' at Cane Ridge speaks volumes. What McNemar's sermon suggests, though, was that even within the purely spiritual realm of the camp meeting, a social dynamic was at work. Such a break from the traditional forms of intellectual sermons is suggestive. Ministers like McNemar were trying to engage and appeal to a wide range of groups, for many of whom the camp meeting may

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[58]Joseph Cabell Harrison 1793-1860, S*ermons*, UKSC.

[59]David Rice, S*ermons*, UKSC.

[60]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 8th August 1801, UKSC.

[61]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 209.

have been their first interaction with religion. McNemar's sermon was importantly engaging the laity at a more personal and emotive level. His sermon and others like it were designed to be less theological and philosophical in structure and more directed to engage individuals who were unaccustomed to the ordinary sermons and who might rarely consider attending a church service. It was, whether intended or not, a way of finding a common ground with the many settlers who would never attend a service in order to unify the collection of strangers into a community. The camp meetings' break with the standard model did not stop at a new form of sermon.

Camp meetings offered a new form of worship that could be overwhelming, and indeed was for many. James Finley, a minister in his own right, confessed that he was so overcome with emotion that he nearly ran away from his first experience of a camp meeting.[62] While the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. John Lyle, recorded in his journal scenes of 'religious fits' and 'distress' at many of the meetings he attended.[63] The strangeness of camp meetings was not confined to those well versed in theology such as ministers alone. Ordinary people, the laity, also frequently made reference to such scenes. Daniel Drake in his series of letters to his children wrote of his experience of a camp meeting stating it 'presented scenes of fanatical raving among the worshippers.'[64] Another observer described camp meetings as 'minsters preaching day and night, the camp illuminated with candles, on trees, at wagons, and at the tent; persons falling down...some mourning, some rejoicing, and great solemnity on every countenance, and you will form some imperfect idea of the extraordinary work!.'[65] Patterson, Finley, Stone, Lyle, and Drake's writings are telling, with the use of poignant words such as 'new', 'strange', 'distress[ing]', and 'fanatical'. Each wrote with what can be assumed as an underlying sense of fear, along with a suggestion of a new form of worship. Camp meetings developed a new form that broke from the traditional solemn and intellectual forms of worship that existed in many of the denominations.

Collective descriptions of the various camp meetings may be used to unearth the

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[62]James Bradley Finley and William Peter Strickland, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, Or, Pioneer Life in the West* (Printed at the Methodist Book Concern, for the author; R. P. Thompson, printer, 1855), 169.

[63]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 14th 1801- August 1801, UKSC.

[64]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 195.

[65]Paterson to King, September 25th 1801, in Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost,* 93.

new rituals of public worship that developed out of camp meetings. First, they lacked the ordinary structures of other forms of worship. Because many of the camp meetings occurred outside the given denomination's set day for the Sabbath, they were considered informal religious events and many of the ministers and laity who attended treated camp meeting as such. The traditional structure of scriptural reading followed by sermons was ignored along with the passive involvement of the laity. Most importantly, the laity became active, rather than purely passive, participants of the meetings. Lyle's record of one camp meeting at Pleasant Point, a few months before Cane Ridge, described 'people... engaged in singing and hearing and praising, night and day, from Friday morning to Tuesday evening.'[66] Indeed, the constant feature of the active involvement of the laity within camp meetings was so common that Lyle would make specific mention within his journals when they were 'unusually solemn and attentive.'[67] The active involvement of the laity in these meetings was of such a common occurrence that another minister, Barton Stone, the minister responsible for the Cane Ridge meeting, dedicated an entire chapter of his autobiography to descriptions of lay activity at the camp meetings.[68]

This new form of public worship would not have been viewed favourable by the more traditional ministers though. Stone recalled that one Presbyterian minister took a strong stance against camp meetings. The minister in question 'labored hard to Calvinize the people, and to regulate them according to his standard of propriety. He wished them to decamp at night, and to repair to the town, nearly a mile off, for worship in a house that could not contain half the people. This could not be done without leaving their tents and all exposed. The consequence was, the meeting was divided, and the work greatly impeded. Infidels and formalists triumphed at this supposed victory, and extolled the preacher to the skies; but the hearts of the revivalists were filled with sorrow.'[69] Evidence suggests that this particular minister may have been John Lyle, who wrote of Cane Ridge 'I left the meeting house and thought if Mr. Stone would not command order and silence and desire the distressed to be carried out I would go there no more.'[70]

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[66] Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 17th June 1801, UKSC.

[67] Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], UKSC.

[68] Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 39 – 42.

[69] Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 43.

[70] Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 29th June 1801, UKSC.

Whether Stone was referring to Lyle or not, Stone's unnamed minister was not alone in his complaints about the new form of worship.[71] Stone, himself, confessed that the first camp meeting he attended was alien and foreign to him.[72] Whether this new form of worship was 'passingly strange' or not, what is important, and what many of the accounts seem to agree on, was that it was inclusive. The new form of public worship that developed within camp meetings importantly pulled every class of the laity into the community. Religious services were no longer passive, intellectual affairs but something more, something integrative, something active involving every individual present. Children, youths, slaves, and women, importantly those groups ignored by the few civil institutions that had been established, became active members within this new form of worship.

Of children and young adults Lyle wrote that 'some old men fell, some young ones of robust constitution, some children about 11 (as Betsy Rogers) about 7 and 8 (as Adam's two children). One miller fell who was telling his daughters lying in distress that if they would again come to such meetings he would beat them well.'[73] The father of Kentucky's camp meetings James McGready acknowledged the presence and importantly the activities of children, repeatedly in his descriptions of early camp meetings. In one case, he wrote 'There you might see little children of ten, eleven and twelve years of age, praying and crying for redemption.'[74] The involvement of children in these meetings is surprising. Within the ordinary Sabbath services of the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist denominations children had no role at all. They were to be present, along with their parents, but they were to be passive and largely silent participants in the services. Indeed, the Baptist denomination often seen as being the most democratic and open of Kentucky's denominations granting almost anyone who perceived a call to minister a place within a congregation held that only adults could be full members and full participants within the life of the congregation. The active involvement then of children within camp meetings, made camp meetings a type of worship that was something extraordinary. This new form of worship offered children and young adults something important: a way to actively participate within a

[71]Finley and Strickland, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, Or, Pioneer Life in the West*, 169.

[72]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 34.

[73]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 29th June 1801, UKSC.

[74]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*, IX.

community, something that was lacking in the backcountry of Kentucky.

Slaves were also present for many camp meetings, becoming more active as the meetings developed. In a letter dated the March 9, 1801 from a gentleman in Lexington to a friend in Washington, the author wrote 'It is with pleasure I inform you, 58 were baptized at Bryant's yesterday 8th March, 120 have been added to that church, among whom were a number of our acquaintance, and several poor black people, some of whose experiences have astonished me –- This is the work of the Lord, and it is marvelous [sic] to our eyes.'[75] Bryant's Station's Baptist Church records, although they do not list the race of those admitted, confirm much of the author's accounts.[76] The account of the event recorded 58 individuals being baptised among them seven individuals recorded as 'Ellis's Mary', 'Ellis's Davy', 'Thomas's Reuben', 'Jone's Ceaser', 'Berry's Daniel', 'Berrys Moses', and 'Jone's Ruth'.[77] The reference to Ellis's Mary or Berry's Moses along with the lack of a last name for the individual strongly suggests that these seven were most likely slaves of Ellis, Jones, Thomas, and Berry. Such accounts make it clear that slaves were present at camp meetings. Though no accounts remain or exist of their direct participation in the events, the mention of these seven as becoming baptised members of the congregation must suggest that slaves were part of the camp meeting environment beyond simply accompanying their white masters.

McNemar was much more explicit in describing the activities of slaves within camp meetings. In his work *The Kentucky Revival* he wrote 'Neither was there any distinction, as to age, sex, color, or anything of a temporary nature; old and young, male and female, black and white, had equal privilege to minister the light which they received, in whatever way the Spirit directed.'[78] For slaves, like children and young adults, the new form of worship offered something lacking in their lives. Eslinger has argued that it was 'a sense of connection and belonging,' while Ellis has argued that for young adults and children it offered 'an opportunity to escape the eyes of watchful parents.'[79] Both of these explanations are undoubtedly true, yet they miss something

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[75]William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1, 610.

[76]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1801, KHS.

[77]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1801, KHS.

[78]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*, 31.

[79] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 225; John Ellis, "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn: Methodism as

important. This new form of worship that developed out of camp meetings offered not just a chance to belong and to feel connected, but also a chance to interact and be truly part of a community in a way that was otherwise impossible for many within these groups. No other institution, be it the militia, the county courts, or the local tavern was as indiscriminate of an individual's age, race, or gender as a camp meeting ritual was. McNemar stated as much when he argued that anyone regardless of 'age, sex, color, or anything of a temporary nature' could not only participate, but even minister within a camp meeting.[80] It was this levelling ideal that appealed to many and allowed camp meetings the opportunity to strengthen bonds of community, by giving these groups a chance to be truly part of and participate in the community in a way that they were barred from in the few other existing institutions.

The generation of community through camp meetings was not limited solely to the development and use of a new form of worship alone. The success was of camp meetings as much related to their organisation and structure as to their content; they were small, local, and communal events in the lives of settlers. With few exceptions, Kentucky's camp meetings, from McGready's first at Gasper and Red Rivers in 1797 to Cane Ridge in 1801 followed much the same structure. That structure was one of small local and communal events. Each of these three aspects was important in its' own right and must be studied as such in order to fully understand the important role these meetings played in the creation of Kentucky's early society.

Camp Meetings As Small Events:

Camp meetings were typically small, often informal, and deeply personal events for those who attended. Contemporary writers of the camp meetings and later historians who have written extensively on the events at Cane Ridge often miss this important concept that the overwhelming majority of such meetings were small-scale informal events. Of the nearly thirty meetings that are known to have occurred between 1797 and 1801 only four (Cabin Creek May 1801, Concord late May to early June 1801, Pleasant Creek June 1801, and Cane Ridge August 1801) are recorded to have more than a

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a Youth Movement in the Upper South and Ohio Valley, 1770–1820." *Ohio Valley History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 18.

[80]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*, 31.

hundred participants.[81] These four meetings, however, account for only 14.8% of those for which we have historical accounts. Importantly, these four all occurred in 1801, the final season of camp meetings and the height of the 'revival.' For the remaining 22 meetings that are known to have occurred during this period, few complete records survive, resulting in little information on the number of those who were present at each meeting. What little data and information we do have on these meetings suggest that, in most cases, either only one congregation was involved, such as the Rev. McGready's first six meetings held between 1797 and 1799, or the number of attendees was not of interest, and, therefore, limited, to those writers to record.[82] This suggests that while Cane Ridge was indeed one of the largest meetings, it was also the exception and not the rule for Kentucky. Indeed, the sheer size of Cane Ridge is one of the reasons historians have studied it so widely. This though has skewed the collective narrative of camp meetings, removing their importance as creators of community and instead focusing the discussion on the after-effects that Cane Ridge alone had on Kentucky, namely the schism within the Presbyterian denomination and the rise of Baptist participation, almost to the exclusion of the participation of other denominations in the meetings that followed. John Boles' *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* as well as Paul Conkin's work *Cane Ridge America's Pentecost* are two such works.[83] Conkin in particular spends the last third of his work on a discussion of the impact Cane Ridge had on both the rise of the Baptist along with problems within the Presbyterian denomination. In particular Conkin suggests that many of the problems that the Presbyterians in Kentucky faced in the early decades of the nineteenth century are in relation to their stance to camp meetings. Boles' work follows similar patterns as Conkin focusing more directly on the Baptist denomination and its relationship to slaves within Kentucky as a result of these meetings. Such works by Conkin, Boles, and others

[81]See Appendix : Camp meeting Database. There has never been a complied complete list of Kentucky Camp meetings. The information found in this database has been derived from several sources. Mainly from the journals and writings of various ministers who participated. Some of these ministers such as the Rev. McNemar (The Kentucky Revival published in 1846) wrote specific works on the topic. Whilst others such as the Rev. Barton Stone or the Rev. James McGready had their letters, sermons, and journals complied and published later. Finally other ministers such as John Lythe kept diaries or journals that were not published. Drawn from such sources, and a few others, a working list of those meetings that occurred can be compiled.

[82]See Appendix Camp meeting Database.

[83]John B Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 123–146; Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* , 115–163.

overlook the importance other camp meetings had and their role in the creation of community.

The typical camp meeting then, was small in both scope and size. The first few seasons of meetings, 1797-1800, saw ministers such as the Rev. McGready convene such gatherings often for individual congregations under their care and not for the masses of the entire region. McGready made this point clear in his description of his first meeting in Kentucky, writing, for example, that 'On Monday the Lord graciously poured out his Spirit; a very general awakening took place perhaps but few families in the congregation could be found who, less or more, were not struck with an awful sense of their lost estate.'[84] The Rev. John Lyle in his early descriptions of early meetings followed similar patterns as McGready identifying individual congregations by name, such as the congregation at Salem or that of Pleasant Point.[85] Finally, Rev. Stone's first meetings at Concord and Cane Ridge before the August 1801 meeting were specific to those two congregations alone.[86] In each of these cases, there is no mention of a wider audience of participants beyond the ordinary bounds of each congregation and the surrounding community. One reason for limiting such meetings to specific congregations was that the meetings themselves were held initially to strengthen the bonds of the particular congregation. Often during these first seasons the congregations in question were newly formed and bonds were ill formed. These meetings were meant to strengthen the internal bonds of the community while, by conducting the meeting outside the bounds of the ordinary Sabbath, allowing their presence to be known to the wider community. McGready wrote of his first meetings that conversations on and about religion were occurring as a result of the awaking of faith among his flock.[87] These conversations were also occurring within the surrounding community and would have brought other individuals to the attention of their local congregations. These sources all suggest that the early camp meetings before 1800 were small-scale events.

The small size alone, however, should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that attendance was limited to those who already belonged to a congregation. The impact of the Pleasant Point Meeting in June of 1801, for example, was felt beyond the

[84]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*, vii–viii.

[85]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 14th 1801- 29th July 1801, UKSC.

[86]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 36–37.

[87]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready,* vii–viii.

physically boundaries of the congregation. McNemar who was present at the time recounted that the 'work' of the Pleasant Point meeting 'was spread extensively through Bourbon, Fayette, and other neighbouring counties; and was carried by a number of its subjects, to the south side of Kentucky.'[88] John Lyle made his own observation of Pleasant Point writing in his diary that 'the number that attended computed to be 3 or 4,000. [This included] Several wagons and carriages and about 80 people from Mr. Robinson's congregation in Mercer.'[89]

Undoubtedly many of the individuals who attended these and other meetings were members not of the congregations that had organised the meeting. Yet references to the presence or arrival of particular congregations, such as Mr. Robinson's at Point Pleasant, strongly suggest that many were not. This argument is made all the more persuasive when data from the various associations and presbyteries for the period are combined. These numbers suggest that only between 6,000 and 10,000 individuals were members of the major denominations throughout the entire state. Even taking membership at the higher end of 10,000, most accounts of Cane Ridge speak of 10,000 to 20,000 individuals attending.[90] This suggests then that a significant proportion of those who attended camp meetings were not counted as members of any given denomination. While information on smaller camp meetings is limited at best, there is little to suggest that the trends of the larger camp meetings were unique.

Historians have frequently demonstrated that a broader sense of community was often lacking in frontier society. The small size therefore of the average camp meeting becomes even more important. At their core, these meetings typically had a single congregation but were not exclusive to that group alone, instead attracting individuals from throughout the surrounding area. This, in turn, created and reinforced a much sought after and needed sense of wider community.[91] The small size of camp meetings alone would justify their significance in creating community, yet this was only one aspect of the whole. In addition, their importance was derived from being local, communal events.

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[88]McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God*, 25.

[89]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], 17th June 1801, UKSC.

[90]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready*, vii–viii.

[91]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 225.

Camp Meetings As Local Events:

Most camp meetings were small events. They were also founded very much as local events in the lives of settlers. As a formative and integrative instrument of community, camp meetings occurred on a local level from the start. This was a crucial step, not just in making camp meetings an indispensable agent in the creation of early community, but also in reaching many more settlers than any other communal institution in the backcountry.

Such local institutions as the tavern or militia catered to a relatively limited segment of the settled population. Reaching only those individuals who in the case of taverns were in the immediate vicinity, or of the militia, whose members were male and of enlistment age. Both institutions catered principally for adult white males. There can be little doubt that such institutions were invaluable in creating a sense of community among those who attended militia musters or drank in the tavern, yet their impact on the wider area and among the broader population of settlers was, at best, limited. The denominations were the only truly major institution that functioned at a wider local level. At the most local level, individual congregations gathered individuals together. While at a wider regional level, presbyteries, conferences, and associations gathered these congregations into a state-wide community and finally at the national level, Synods and General Conferences gathered these regional institutions together into a nation-wide body.

These denominations went beyond limited institutions such as taverns and militia to include potentially every individual from the cradle to the grave. Much of their theology and practice meant these denominations also played an important role in the milestones of an individual's life, from baptisms to marriage, and from sacraments of the sick, to funeral rites. At many of these events, the congregation was also often present, at baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Yet, these events were generally limited to individuals who actively participated in the life of their local congregation. Camp meetings, as a local event, enabled denominations to reach beyond their immediate confines to those who were not part of a given congregation.

It was from this starting point, at the basic congregational level, that camp meetings were first formed. There is little evidence that the early camp meetings were ever meant to be more than local events. Of the descriptions McGready left of his first seven meetings, between 1797 and 1800, all focus on congregations and individuals he knew. He used the term ‘the congregation’ five times in seven entries interspersed with

the use of phrases such as ‘but a few families’ or ‘in every house, and in almost in every company.’[92] It is only with the seventh meeting that occurred at Gasper River in July 1800 that there was any mention of individuals from outside the local area. Of this McGready wrote, ‘here the multitudes crowded from all parts of the country to see a strange work, from the distance of forty, fifty and even a hundred miles.’[93] Yet even here the description started with ‘the Sacrament was administered in Gasper River Congregation.’[94]

These were without doubt, small meetings, and early ones at that, but even the larger meetings were never meant to be anything more than local events. The Rev. Stone's description of the 1801 season that led up to the Cane Ridge event of August of that year suggests as much.[95] In these descriptions, Stone, like McGready before him, uses terms such as ‘at our meeting’, ‘the meeting’, and references to ‘the neighbourhood.’[96] His description of the meeting at Concord that occurred just a month before the larger Cane Ridge meeting, suggests that it too was intended initially to be an event for the local congregation writing that ‘the effects of this meeting through the country were like fire in dry stubble driven by a strong wind.’[97] This suggests that it was only through word of mouth that such meetings grew so large. This idea is strengthened when sources such as the *Kentucky Gazett*e, along with presbyteries, synod, and association minutes are examined. If camp meetings were ever meant to be more than local events, these wider institutions would have recorded them. Yet of the 30 editions of the *Kentucky Gazette* that refer to either the word ‘revival’ or ‘camp meetings’, none are advertisements for future events. Twenty-two of thirty come closest but are in fact advertisements for Rev. Adam Rankin's work *A Review of the Noted revival in Kentucky.*[98] Another two are separate advertisements for a work by David Thomas that

[92]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James McGready,* vii-viii.

[93]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James Mc Gready,* ix.

[94]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James Mc Gready,* ix.

[95]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 36–38.

[96]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone,* 36–37.

[97]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 37.

[98]*The Kentucky Gazette, Digitized* scans of Lexington’s *Kentucky Gazette* from 1787 to 1840, can be accessed online from: "Kentuckiana Digital Library," http://kdl.kyvl.org.

was a rebuttal of Rankin's book.[99] The *Kentucky Gazette* was a secular newspaper and though it seems unlikely that such an influential institution would be silent on the topic of camp meetings it does suggest that the publisher viewed them, as local events without a broader state-wide significance. The newspaper's silence on camp meetings is even more profound when one looks at discussions of religion in general within the *Kentucky Gazette.* Within the pages of its editions from as early as 1787 can be found a variety of discussions on religion from articles on the founding of the Transylvania Seminary, September 1, 1787, to advertisements, editorials, and notices from various denominations about upcoming association meetings or the building of churches. Indeed, it seems that the *Kentucky Gazette* was one of the few institutions where such information could be easily disseminated throughout the territory.

The silence of the Kentucky newspaper might be expected when dealing with religious matters, yet the near silence of the denominations on the subject is not. The Elkhorn Association Minutes, for the period 1798 to 1803, make no overt reference to camp meetings during this period.[100] Indeed, only one passing entry suggests that the subject was breached at all during the period, when in August of 1799 the association recorded 'We advise the Churches of our union to be aware of encouraging any stranger to preach among them without proper Credentials and a fair character.'[101] The Transylvania Presbytery remained as silent between March 1797 (when the Rev. James McGready, father of Kentucky's camp meetings, joined the presbytery) and 1803 with no references either explicit or overt can be found.[102] Similarly, the Synod of Kentucky shows no mention of camp meetings recorded till late 1803 when the Revs Stone, McNemar and others were removed from the Synod and their respective presbyteries.[103] This would come to be known as the Cumberland Schism and was only tangentially related to the work of camp meetings. Indeed, the schism had more to do with ministerial training and theological outlook that Stone and others had developed over

[99]The last six references are related to a sundry of topics ranging from the revival of peace negotiations in the British House of Commons to references to proposed Kentucky State law. None of these final six were in fact related to religion or camp meetings in the slightest.

[100]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1799, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[101]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1799, SBTSSC.

[102]Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], March 7th 1797, UKSC.

[103]Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, September 1803, KHS.

the years. In these cases, their crime was one of dangerous theology and the refusal to obey the teachings of the wider synod.

The silence of these governing bodies suggests that there was no coordination of camp meetings at a wider level. Individuals, families, and the occasional congregation who arrived at meetings, did so on their own. Knowledge of these meetings was most likely spread by word of mouth. The Rev. Stone, for example, recalled that his congregation 'had collected, anxious to hear the religious news of the meeting I had attended in Logan. I ascended the pulpit, and gave a relation of what I had seen and heard.'[104] This was not uncommon either, for in Kentucky during this period, as elsewhere, the only way that many settlers could gain knowledge or information about events within the state was from those who had witnessed them. Daniel Trabue emphasised this point when he wrote of family and friends who 'asked me a bundence[sic] of questions about Kentucky and the Indians. I told them all about it. My Relations and the neighbours all would come to see me and I must go to see them in return.'[105] If such meetings had been coordinated at any level beyond that of individual ministers or had gone beyond the activity of individual congregations, one would suspect that events such as Cane Ridge or Concord would have been the norm instead of an anomaly. Camp meetings had a powerful effect of bringing individuals and families together and in creating much-needed community. It would have been negligent of the denominations not to have used such tools to their fullest if they had been fully cognizant of their true impact on settlers and on the wider Kentucky society of the time.

Instead, news of meetings and gatherings occurred via word of mouth alone. Without wider coordination occurring, camp meetings were never meant to be more than local events and herein lay their importance within Kentucky. They were one of the few local events that occurred with any regularity in the lives of settlers. Camp meetings, unlike other local institutions, such as the militia and taverns, catered to as wide a segment of the population as any institution could.

Camp Meetings As Communal:

Being small and local events was an important feature of camp meetings, yet their success had more to do with the communal atmosphere that developed out of the

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[104]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 36.

[105]Daniel Trabue, *Daniel Trabue's Narrative*, DM57J.

earliest meetings. That these meetings were able to create the much sought after community that settlers sought was as much to do with the character and involvement of McGready as anything else. Paul Conkin has argued that McGready chose the dates and places of his meetings with extraordinary care so that all three congregations under his supervision, Red River, Muddy River, and Gasper River congregations, could attend.[106] While Conkin never fully explains how he arrived at this conclusion, what little survives of McGready's writings, a handful of sermons and a few letters, along with accounts of other meetings, does offer some support to this argument. Of those meetings that McGready was known to have held in these early years, they occurred on a nearly monthly basis starting in either May or June and ending typically, with three exceptions, in September or October. Importantly, McGready's meetings were held out-with each congregation's ordinary Sabbath, allowing each congregation to retain their Sabbath as a day in which they could meet as separate communities. Of the 15 meetings McGready mentions by name, only the first two (Gasper River August 1799 and Muddy River Sept 1799) along with those of Ridge Sacrament and Shiloh Sacrament, which occurred in Sept 1800, occurred on what McGready referred to as the Sabbath.[107] It was this very concept of holding camp meetings outside the normal Sabbath and on a somewhat regular basis, which was vital. By placing camp meetings outside the normal established Sabbath, those who attended were given a chance to form bonds of community, both within a group they were familiar with, yet outside the structure of the ordinary service.[108]

From almost the very start, those who attended these meetings made use of this opportunity to socialise and interact outside the strict confines of the religious service. McGready wrote of this in a letter to a friend in 1801 making repeated use of the phrase 'the congregation was then dismissed; but the people all kept their seats' refusing to be dismissed.[109] After McGready had left, his audience continued to interact and socialise with each other. McGready was not alone in this reference, with many of the narratives that survive from ministers to the laity alike commenting on the social importance of these meetings. Barton Stone referenced this in his description of his first camp meeting

[106]Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost,* 57.

[107]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready,* VII- VIII, IX, 450.

[108]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 225–226.

[109] McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gread,* viii.

in 1801 writing that ‘the multitudes came together, and continued a number of days and nights encamped on the ground; during which time worship was carried on in some part of the encampment.’[110] Presumably, if worship was carried on only ‘in some part of the encampment,’ in other parts of the encampment it was not and in these areas people would socialise and interact. John Ellis in his study of Methodist camp meetings in the south during the early nineteenth century has shown young adults saw these meetings as a place to interact and socialize with the opposite sex away from the watchful eyes of their parents.[111] Both genders found such meetings as an important opportunity to flirt and socialize in a setting that many parents would have felt comfortable allowing their children to attend. These young adults went so far as to dress up for the occasion in order to make the largest impact with the other gender. Ellis recounts one participant, Elizabeth Roe, who recalled that such meetings were 'a great place to show off and make a grand appearance' choosing with care her outfit for the meeting.[112] Daniel Drake recalled seeing young men engaged in what he refereed to as 'levity and vice' when they should have been tending to their souls.[113] Drinking, games of dice and cards, and flirting among some attendees of these meetings were occurring alongside scenes of worship. Finally, the Rev. John Lyle was more subtle with his descriptions but makes particular mention of the attendees arriving with ‘wagons and carriages’ often packed with supplies necessary for camping. Tied closely to this, reports mention time and again that religious meetings occurred in only parts of the camps.[114] The laity, it would seem, found an opportunity to interact with one another long after the religious component of the camp meeting was completed.

While the regular, almost monthly, nature of these events gave settlers something to look forward to, the protracted nature of these meetings—all lasted at least two days with several lasting a week or more—played a significant role. For those who attended, the camp meeting was an all-encompassing experience. They would live and worship in

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[110]Stone and Rogers, *The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone*, 34.

[111]John Ellis. "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn: Methodism as a Youth Movement in the Upper South and Ohio Valley, 1770–1820." *Ohio Valley History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 18-19.

[112]John Ellis. "The Confused, the Curious, and the Reborn: Methodism as a Youth Movement in the Upper South and Ohio Valley, 1770–1820." *Ohio Valley History* 10, no. 1 (2010): 18-19.

[113]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 195.

[114]August 1801, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm] UKSC.

very close quarters with those around them from dawn until, in many cases, long into the night.[115] Various accounts make it clear that individuals were typically loathe to head home at day's end for fear of missing out on some occurrence, instead choosing to stay within the grounds of the meeting. Camping invariably became a crucial part of these meetings and in doing so offered participants a chance to socialize, the starting block of later community. Daniel Drake makes it clear in his letters that such socializing occurred with some regularity writing 'their camp meetings in the woods, which I sometimes attended, presented scenes of… levity and vice...'[116] The vice Drake referred to would have been similar to what occurred at court and market days: drunkenness, cards, and games of dice. Such occurrences would seem out of place; even it might be argued scandalous, if these meetings were solely religious events in nature. Yet the presence of what Drake referred to as 'vice' suggests strongly that these meetings were much more than solely religious events, they were communal. Indeed, Drake's reference is similar in both nature and tone to those of other social gatherings. The Rev. James Finely recalled 'a house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could there be a log rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding, or a funeral without aid of alcohol.'[117] Social events invariably brought out such excesses by those who attended. Camp meetings were as much social and communal events for settlers as they were religious with entire families packing up and arriving to participate fully.

As early as the 1800 season of camp meetings in Kentucky, whole families were attending with the expressed purpose of camping. McGready wrote of a Gasper River meeting 'Here multitudes crowded from all parts of the country to see a strange work, from the distance of forty, fifty and even a hundred miles; whole families came in their wagons; between twenty and thirty wagons were brought to the place, loaded with people, and their provisions, in order to encamp at the meeting house.'[118] Other accounts, both from McGready and others, make repeated mention of both children and young adults being present. John Lyle was one recording 'some children about 11 (as

[115]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 226.

[116]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 195.

[117]James Bradley Finley and William Peter Strickland, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, Or, Pioneer Life in the West* (Printed at the Methodist Book Concern, for the author; R. P. Thompson, printer, 1855), 248.

[118]McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready,* ix.

Betsy Rogers) about 7 and 8 as Adams two children).'[119] That the youths and young adults of Kentucky attended to camp meetings cannot be doubted. Accounts from ministers and others frequently made specific reference to this group. Again Lyle offers an example in his descriptions and often attaches statements such as 'Adam's two children' or that a given individual was someone's son or daughter.[120]

For such groups within Kentucky, camp meetings offered some excitement lacking in their ordinary lives. For Kentucky's culture, for the most part, found its genesis from its parent state of Virginia. In many ways, it was a highly structured, patriarchal society in which every member of the family was placed under the control of the head of the household, namely in most ordinary cases that of the husband and father. For young males, until they came of age much of their independence was limited and controlled by their father. For young women, they all but lacked any real form of independence within society for they were under their fathers until marriage when their legal status came under their husbands. The ordinary religious service was not much better. Church services of the leading denominations be it Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, or even Baptist were dominated by church Elders who as the title implies were established, and by extension older members of the congregation and male. For the young there was little to do but be passive members of the congregation.

Kentucky's frontier both religiously and culturally left little opportunity for these two groups to feel connected, or part of a community and to break from this patriarchal control of their lives. The added hardship of travel, the distribution of settlement, and few social institutions meant that these groups also found few opportunities to mingle. Migration to the West had broken many ties of kinship, particularly for women. For many women traditional bonds of family and community were weak or absent following their arrival in Kentucky. Children similarly often lived isolated from other kin, and the lack of schools meant that they had only limited contact with other children. Through the new form of worship and the social component, camp meetings became a lifeline to such groups. For the first time, the youths and young adults of Kentucky found a way to belong. Eslinger has argued that camping was so crucial to the success of these meeting because it was through this process that social and economic status of the individuals became irrelevant. Because all those who attended camp meetings lived

[119]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 29th 1801, UKSC.

[120]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 29th 1801, UKSC.

in a similar fashion, 'camping' in the woods, social differences were greatly reduced.[121] The communal nature of camping, the lack of the normal structure of a Sabbath service, and the social equalizing of the environment put everyone on the same level. Camping became as crucial to these meetings as the religious service, and for many, even more so. Just as the inclusive nature of the new form of worship that came out of Kentucky's camp meetings, the social element of these meetings played as significant a role. From families to young adults, and from women to the poorest of the poor, every segment of the population gained something important from the communal social component of camp meetings.

Conclusion: Camp Meetings As Events:

'Their camp meetings… presented scenes of fanatical raving among the worshippers, and of the levity.'[122] With these words, Daniel Drake succinctly summed up what camp meetings truly were to many of the attendees. They were both social gatherings and religious services. They were founded for specific congregations, yet were open to all. In short, camp meetings were important communal events in the lives of many settlers. The regularity of these meetings gave settlers something to look forward to, a chance to break from the daily cycle of life in Kentucky, if only for a little while. For many settlers, the backcountry was a place of loneliness and disconnection from the rest of humanity. Much like the court day, election day, or market day, of older settlements in the East, for Kentucky's settlers, camp meetings were a chance to gather with neighbours, to commune with extended family, and to participate fully in the broader community.[123]

The nature of these meetings as small, local, and communal events was important in this period. Camp meetings provided something that settlers needed, a sense of community and belonging that no other institution was able to meet so fully.[124] Court days were at their heart legal affairs that could be highly stressful and antagonistic. The county court was also, in many cases, a fair distance for many settlers to travel. The local militia was closer to home, met regularly, and gave those who participated a venue

[121]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 226.

[122]Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 195.

[123]Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 88, 110–115.

[124]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 214.

to bond over a common activity. Yet, the militia was only for those of enlistment age and male, and ignored women, the elderly, and the very young as well as African-Americans. The local tavern was, much like the local militia, a local institution yet not everyone participated and again it was male-dominated in its clientèle. The local congregation was at its very roots the one institution that had the potential to cater to the broadest segment of the population. The hierarchy of many of the leading denominations, though, was dominated by older males of the congregation leaving younger individuals and women to be no more than passive participants in their own congregation. Camp meetings broke this pattern by being both one of the few local communal events that existed in these early days while also being the most inclusive of the institutions. Accounts from ministers and the laity alike speak to this time and again pointing out the active role played by women and the young.

Camp meetings may not have been revivals, but they were religious movements in their own right. Out of these meetings came a new form of worship that was more inclusive, offering these excluded groups a chance to participate fully in the theatre of these meetings. Many of the accounts that survive speak of children as young as 'seven or eight' being in attendance and more importantly being active participants in these meetings.[125] Other accounts speak of young adults, both male and female, being present along with whole families who arrived with wagons packed full with supplies.[126] Such accounts also speak often to the active and important role women in particular played in making camp meetings so vital. Whether it was in reference to their outbursts of religious fits, a sign of their full and active participation within the context of the meeting, or as one of the main driving forces of extending meetings beyond the religious service, there is little doubt that women played an important role.

Out of these meetings came a new form of religious service that was more inclusive and required full participation from all quarters. Yet these meetings were also much more. They were also important social and communal events in the lives of those who attended. Their regularity and their size pulled together not just those individuals who were already members of congregations but nearly everyone from the surrounding area and therein lay the importance of these meetings for the denominations. If

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[125]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 17th 1801, UKSC.

[126]Rev. John Lyle, The diary of John Lyle, [microfilm], June 17th 1801, UKSC; Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky*, 195.

denominations were to grow, they needed to find ways of gaining members. Camp meetings offered the denominations a way to reach those settlers who may not have entered their spheres of influence otherwise. Yet this was only the first part of the process by which the denominations would become creators of community for much of Kentucky. Once individual settlers entered the denominations' spheres of influence they needed to keep them involved and part of the wider whole. The next two chapters will examine how, once settlers entered the spheres of influence, denominations turned attendees of camp meetings into members and how in doing so became, for many, creators and providers of community.

Chapter Three

The Congregations

Camp meetings were an important way of introducing a wide segment of the settler populations, many for the first time, to Kentucky's denominations. By taking the denominations outside the physical confines of their churches, and often outside the established Sabbath, camp meetings quickly became a necessary and useful tool for the denominations in their interaction with settlers. These meetings were intended only to be a starting point for both the denominations and settlers. Camp meetings were, it must be remembered, temporary events often lasting only a few days, while the larger camp meeting season occurred over only a handful of months of the year, typically between May and September. The work of these meetings was intended to direct settlers towards the denominations' local congregations. It was at this level, the congregational level, that denominations placed much of their focus and energy.

The importance Kentucky's denominations placed on their local congregations can be found in their growth over much of the period. The Presbyterians, for example, grew from the one congregation, established by David Rice in 1785 to 42 congregations by 1800. The Baptists saw such growth as well with one of its associations, Elkhorn Association, growing from 4 congregations in June of 1785 to 27 congregations during the same period.[1] The Episcopalians transformed from a society of a few dozen individuals to a fully functioning congregation by 1809.[2] The emphasis, by each of the denominations, on the local congregation was such that Kentucky's only Presbytery, as early as 1793, 'ordered that no congregation be formed where the House of public worship belonging to such congregation shall be within the distance of ten miles on any older congregation, unless express leave is first obtained from the presbytery.'[3]

That emphasis on the local congregational level was not misplaced. Presbyteries, associations, synods, and conferences, played a role in organising both the denominations and the state. Yet for the average settler, such organisations had little

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[11] Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1800, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections, Louisville Kentucky (hereafter SBTSSC).

[2]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], August 2th 1808, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

[3]Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], 24 April 1793, UKSC.

day-to-day impact or importance.[4] It was at the local level, after the camp meetings had ended, that settlers had the most interaction with the denominations. It was there that the growth in members occurred and where settlers often turned for important alternatives to social and civil institutions that were lacking within the backcountry.[5] For many settlers, the denominations became centres of the community not just because they sought some form of salvific grace, but importantly because they sought functioning institutions and belonging.

This chapter will examine the importance of the local congregation within Kentucky. This study will begin with the idea of membership. It will examine how settlers joined their local congregation and why. In particular, this study of membership will focus on the process of membership and how it was often communal for both the one seeking membership and the wider community. This chapter will then move to the role of the congregation as both a communal and local institution in the lives of settlers. Specifically, it will examine the concept of the congregation as being important, local institutions that catered to the needs of its laity. Finally, this study of the congregation will argue that for many settlers the congregation offered useful alternatives to civil institutions. This study will examine one institution in particular that was often neglected by state authorities, that of education. Through the study of education, this chapter will demonstrate how congregations began the process of building community and society for many settlers.

Membership:

For many settlers membership in the local congregation was the next step in their interaction with the denominations after camp meetings. Membership in a local congregation was deemed important to settlers. It was through membership that settlers gained entry into a stable community and access to all that it, and the wider community, contained in a denomination could offer. Settlers saw value in membership to their local congregation from the start. David Rice wrote that he found 'Many [settlers had]... produced certificates of their having been regular members in full communion and in good standing in the churches from which they had emigrated, and this they

[4]See chapter 5: Ordering the Frontier for a discussion on the importance of these institution within Kentucky.

[5]For a discussion on the institutions that were legislated and established within Kentucky see chapter 1: Legislated Institutions.

thought entitled them to what, they called christian [sic] privileges here. Others would be angry and raise a quarrel with their neighbours if they did not certify, contrary to their knowledge and belief, that the bearer was a good moral character.'[6] The arguments over membership that Rice recalled are unsurprising when one considers that certificates of membership were an important tool for congregations and highly sought after by settlers. A certificate of membership granted an individual direct entry into to a new congregation. Without a certificate, the individual would have been required to follow the same process and initiation rites as those who were considered unchurched. Importantly, within backcountry environments such certificates also represented a form of implicit trust and reputation to the holder. Such certificates declared that the holder had belonged to an established congregation and was in good standing. In other words, the holder of such a certificate could be trusted to both uphold the values of the community and was willing to abide by a congregation's laws.

That settlers were willing to go to such lengths is unsurprising. For many, the local congregation was most likely the only visible symbol of community and society for miles around. Though they were often small in size, congregations were broadly inclusive in ideas of community, accepting nearly everyone, regardless of social status, gender, or age within their bounds. This made the congregation all the more important for settlers. Denominations though took the concept of membership seriously. Rice took the issue with such seriousness that he refused to constitute any new congregation during his first year in the region even after many of his new flock had 'produced certificates' of membership.[7] Instead, he chose to spend the year preaching around the region in order to educate his flock in what he referred to as 'the first principles of religion.'[8] He did this even though both Rice's presbytery, Hanover presbytery, and the wider Synod of New York and Philadelphia had ordered 'that a few ministers of genius, prudence, and address, might spend some considerable time in attempting to form that people into regular congregations, under the discipline and government of the

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6 Robert Hamilton Bishop and David Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men Who Were Eminent and Useful in Their Day* (T. T. Skillman, 1824), 68.

7 Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68.

8 Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*,), 68.

Presbyterian church, and to settle among them, and undertake the education of their youth.'[9] The goal of both the presbytery and synod was to form such individuals into functioning members of local congregations. Rice's objective was to ultimately fulfil his obligations to the presbytery, yet he understood that, no matter how much they desired it, many of Kentucky's settlers would have been unprepared for the obligations of membership. Nor, Rice's actions suggest, would they have understood how the denomination interpreted and defined membership.

How each denomination defined and understood the concept of membership varied. For Episcopalians, during this period, the concept had both broad and narrow definitions. Virginia law had, until the passing of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom in January 1786, understood all individuals as part of the county parish including those within Kentucky. Membership was part and parcel of settlement within a county whether one believed in Episcopalian doctrines or not. This was true for Kentucky as the legislation that created the county was followed by legislation that saw the division of the parish of Botetourt into four new parishes.[10] After 1792, the definition seems to have been more narrowly defined to those who were baptised in the faith. The relationship the denomination had with Henry Clay is a useful example of this. Clay's association with the denomination began long before the founding of the first Episcopal Church, Christ Church, in 1808. Clay was a member of the Episcopalian Society for many years. Though no list survives, if it ever existed, of the members of the Episcopalian Society, Clay's association is suggested by one contemporary of Clay commenting that 'he [Clay] joined a village club but for a long while took no active part in its proceedings.'[11] Though not definitive, the context of the comment combined with knowledge of Clay's character suggests that this may have been the Episcopalian Society that would have been one of the premier groups of elite individuals in and around Lexington during this period. This association led to Clay becoming one of the congregation's founding members with his name appearing in the minute book of Christ

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9 Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716...* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), 484.

10 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 257-261.

11 Henry Clay and James B. (James Barrett) Swain, *The Life and Speeches of Henry Clay* (New York : Greeley & McElrath, 1843), 11.

Church in 1808.[12] Indeed, Clay would remain a pew-renter for the rest of his life, as well as an occasional vestryman.[13] Yet even with such association, Clay never formally joined the congregation and his apparent irreligious nature would be picked up on, and criticized, by voters in his 1844 bid for the Presidency of the United States. This may have been a major factor in his baptism and confirmation, into the Episcopalian fold, only a few years later in 1847.[14] If membership had been broadly understood as merely an association with the denomination, there would have been little reason for Clay to be baptised and confirmed. Yet for Episcopalians this was the process of formal membership into its community. In the decades before the Revolutionary War, membership of the Anglican Church was universal. It was only through conscious and active efforts that any settler within colonies such as Virginia, where the Anglican Church was the established church, could remove themselves from its membership. Membership, in other words, was universal. After the Revolution the process was reversed with membership to both the Episcopalian denomination, and indeed any other denomination, requiring the individual to make an active and sustained effort to join, often requiring both baptism and confirmation.

Concepts of membership were of such importance to Baptist congregations that for individual congregations debates and decisions about membership took up a significant portion of each monthly meeting. Bryant's Station, for example between 1788 and 1800, recorded 469 separate cases about membership raised at its monthly meetings.[15] There was an average of three cases dealing with membership requests every month, for a congregation that averaged only around 200 members. Smaller congregations, as well, spent a significant portion of their time on membership. Tate's Creek, which had a membership between 16 and 60 members over the same period (1788 - 1800), had 102 separate cases between 1788 and 1800.[16] For these congregations, membership was an important, indeed central, communal event, both for

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12 Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm],August 25th 1808, UKSC.

13 Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm],August 25th 1808, UKSC.

14 John E. Kleber, *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (University Press of Kentucky, n.d.), 296.

15 Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 1788 – 1800, Kentucky Historical Society Special Collections, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KHS).

16 Tates Creek Baptist Church Records 1793 - 1824, 1788 to 1800, KHS.

those who sought membership, as well as, those who were already members.

Baptist congregations were organized along strong democratic principles. Nearly every decision of importance to a congregation required a vote by a majority of members. Membership was one of those decisions. The Rev. John Taylor recalled that for the Buck Run congregation 'any business in which particular fellowship is not affect[ed] may be done by a majority of voices.'[17] This regulation affected both those seeking membership and those who were brought before the ecclesiastical court and required a decision by a minimum of a two-thirds majority. Nor was the Buck Run requirement uncommon. Many other congregations held similar beliefs. Bryant's Station's congregation in its first meeting as a newly created congregation in May of 1786 agreed that 'all matters teaching fellowship to be determined by unanimity [sic].'[18] While Marble Creek's regulation was more broad reaching, agreeing that 'the Church transact her Common Business with Open Doors and as such Matters as the Church shall Deem of a Private Nature to be done in Private [sic].'[19]

Whether explicitly stated within a congregation's conventional agreements or rules of decorum or not, decisions about membership were communal events for Baptists. For existing members, they had an important function to fulfil, deciding whether a candidate was right and proper for their congregation. Congregation records only noted those candidates who were accepted yet the nature of Baptist theological understandings leaves little doubt that there were many individuals whose candidacies were rejected.

For the candidate, the process was just as communal. There were three ways in which new candidates could enter a congregation: reception by letter, reception by experience, and reception by baptism. Reception by letter was the most straight-forward of the three. It began when an individual had already been 'a member in full fellowship' of one Baptist congregation, moved away from its jurisdiction and sought a letter of dismissal. Such letters were often formalistic in form often stating 'the Church of Christ

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17 John Taylor, *A history of ten Baptist churches : of which the author has been alternately a member in which will be seen something of the author's life, for more than fifty years : also, a comment on some parts of scripture, in which the author takes the liberty to differ from other expositors,* KHS; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 177–184.

18 Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, May 1786, KHS.

19 Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], July 13th 1787, KHS.

of/upon [name] of the Baptist faith. Greetings to any sister church of the same order. We do certify that [name of individual] is a member of this church in full fellowship order and dismissed from us when joined by any other church of our faith and by order of this church.'[20] The letter of dismissal was then turned over to the new congregation, and after a vote by the congregation the individual was accepted into the community.

For those who sought entrance through either reception by experience or reception by baptism, the process was more involved. Both receptions often required the candidate to give a detailed history of their religious experiences that led them to that point. These were known as conversion narratives. While often presented orally to a congregation their form can still be found within many of the autobiographies written by both ministers and laity of the period. Useful examples of these can be found in the Rev. William Hickman's autobiography *A Short Account of My Life and Travels,* John Taylor's *A History of Ten Baptist Churches,* and finally Daniel Trabue's *The Narrative of Daniel Trabue.*[21] Within these narratives the candidate would often begin their narrative with their birth. Hickman and Taylor both began their narratives this way. Hickman recalled 'I was born in the county of King and Queen, Virginia, on the 4th day of February 1747; My father of the name of Thomas Hickman; my mother's name was Sarah Sanderson before marriage.'[22] While Taylor was more succinct writing 'the place of my nativity was Farquire County, Virginia' and in the year of our Lord 1752, I was born.'[23] Narratives quickly moved on with candidates often expressing the sinfulness of their lives before turning to religion. Hickman recalled a life where he 'fell in with evil habits' while Trabue 'went out into the army and soon niglected [sic] to pray and became a Deist.'[24] Such sections could be detailed or quite short. Their purpose though was to show a life that was both bettered by religion and the community it offered and

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20 Church Letters 1808 - 1853, February 22nd 1801 Letter of Dismissal, UKSC.

21 William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life and Travels. For more than Fifty Years; a Professed Servant of Jesus Christ,* KHS; John Taylor's *A History of Ten Baptsist Churches,* 237- 300 KHS*;* Daniel Trabue's *The Narrative of Daniel Trabue,* Draper Manuscript Collection DM57J (here after DM) Lyman Copeland Draper and State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Kentucky papers*, The Draper Manuscript ([Madison, Wis.]: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey [distributor]).

22 William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life,* 1, KHS.

23 John Taylor's *A History of Ten Baptist Churches*, 237, KHS.

24 William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life,* 2, KHS; Daniel Trabue's *The Narrative of Daniel Trabue* DM57J.

that they were part of the elect. Within Calvinist theology, individuals had to demonstrate that they were one of God's chosen, one of the elect, in order to fulfil membership requirements to the congregation.

Finally, the narratives often had a Pauline 'On the Road to Damascus' moment where the candidate was forced to recognize their sinful nature and turned towards religion. Hickman, Taylor, and Trabue all had such experiences. Hickman wrote of his first meeting with a Baptist minister and his work stating 'I went home heavy hearted, knowing myself in a wretched state; I informed my wife what I had seen and heard.'[25] Taylor had similar experiences witnessing one minister, a Mr. Williams, on the Shenandoah River. '[his] word pierced my soul as quick and with as much sensibility as an electric shock. In a moment my mind was open to see and feel the truth of all he said. I felt as if then at the bar of God, and as if condemnation was pronounced against me.'[26] Trabue stated he heard a voice in the night 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required to thee... I was much alarmed and said to myself, 'What shall I Do?' I felt condemned and Did not know what to Do [sic].'[27] In each case, the experience turned the individual towards God and religion becoming in turn evidence of salvation. With both reception by experience and reception by baptism, once the narrative was given the congregation voted. If accepted, the next step was often baptism by immersion. Such baptisms were communal events often seeing the entire congregation turn out for the event. Within Baptist congregations particularly it was not uncommon for several individuals to be baptised at once.[28] Only after the baptismal rites had been performed was the candidate considered a full member of the congregation.[29]

The process for Baptists was a communal activity. The requirement to make a conversion narrative provided an important opportunity for the candidate to explain why

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25 William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life and Travels. For more than Fifty Years; a Professed Servant of Jesus Christ* KHS, 3.

26 John Taylor's *A History of Ten Baptist Churches 237- 300,* KHS.

27 Daniel Trabue's *The Narrative of Daniel Trabue* DM57J.

28 Jacob Bower, "*The Autobiography of Jacob Bower*: *A Frontier Baptist Preacher and Missionary*," in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 198–199,303,517.

29 Rule for admission into a congregation were often laid out in the constitution or the rule of decorum at the founding of a new congregation. Examples can be found in Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, KHS; Tates Creek Baptist Church Records 1793 -1824, KHS; Buck Run Baptist Church Records, 1818-1921 (bulk 1818-1868), KHS.

they wanted to join the congregation. It also offered a way for the candidate to introduce themselves to their new congregation in a way that was formulaic yet deeply personal. Each narrative was as unique as the individual who told it. They were opening themselves up to the community and in return seeking acceptance for whom they were and what they had to offer. The process was also communal for those who listened to the narrative, the congregation at large. It was they who had the chance to vote on the individual's membership into the community. This was thus an active process on both sides. In doing so, it required both the larger community and the individual to assess the held values of the community and to consider whether the candidate, through their narrative, properly fit into those values. The process reaffirmed those values and the idea of community by requiring the congregation to constantly acknowledge their importance.

Membership was for Kentucky's denominations an active process. It required the individual seeking entrance to make an active choice and often involved not just the individual, but the entire congregation in that process. That membership though granted settlers access to one of the few institutions active in the backcountry. Membership granted access to an institution that was importantly both communal and local.

The Congregation As Community:

Community began with membership, but it continued at the local congregational level. That community was also broad reaching. Modern distinctions between public and private life, or indeed between public life and religious life, were not as prominent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as today. There were strong links between church and state for much of the colonial period with a majority of the American colonies having instituted state churches. The New England colonies with their links to Congregationalist and Southern colonies with the Anglican Church are perhaps the most commonly known yet even religiously open colonies such as Pennsylvania often required a belief in Christianity.[30] Anything that had a direct impact on the congregation as a whole fell within the scope of the congregation and within the

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Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 135, 164–165; John K Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Sally Schwartz, *'A Mixed Multitude': The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 1987); Patricia U Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

work of the minister.

Ministers from all denominations saw their duty to their congregations as extending far beyond that of just Sabbath services and went to great lengths to support their congregations even to the point of risking their own safety and health. An early description of Kentucky's first Catholic priest, Father Theodore Badin describes him as 'travers[ing] Kentucky on horseback hundreds of times on missionary duty; and he spent nearly half his time in the saddle. Through rain and storm, through hail and snow; along the beaten path and through the trackless wilderness, by day and by night, he might be seen going on his errand of mercy: often for years together, alone in the field.'[31] Two of Fr. Badin's fellow priests Fr.s' Fournier and Salmon, who arrived in 1797 and 1799 respectively, both died late in 1799 in pursuit of their ministries.[32] The harsh environment and stress of the assignment led to Fr. Fournier's death a few months after his arrival in Kentucky caused, by one historian's account, by a cold.[33] Fr. Salmon death was more tragic. He fell from his horse on his return to Bardstown after contracting a serious illness as a result of him spending long hours in the saddle and in inclement weather riding between the various Catholic communities that had sprung up around Bardstown.[34] Another example of ministers going beyond their obligations was seen time and again when they called on those of their congregation who were housebound because of illness or of remoteness.[35] As late as the 1830's, writing to her brother, one settler commented, 'It has been a long time since I last went to church, but it has been illness that has keep caused my staying away from a place that I know it is my duty to attend every Sabbath. We have a very fine and good preacher here, Mr. Taylor. I never have heard him preach yet, but every time when he passes my house he stops and talks to me.'[36] What they discussed is less relevant than the idea that the minister saw it as part of his calling to meet with members of his congregation as often

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31 Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 486.

32 Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky :* vol. 1, 487.

33 Hon. Ben J. Webb, *A Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky,* 75.

34 Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky :* vol. 1, 486–467.

35 Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

36 Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

as possible, even those who he had yet to meet in the more formal setting of the physical church or the Sabbath service. Such activities on the part of the minister would have been important for many settlers, particularly women, who were often, left feeling isolated and alone living in the backcountry. It must be remembered that many of Kentucky's settlers did not live in or near the few towns that existed. For many of Kentucky's population home was an isolated family farm. A minister making the rounds of his congregation would have brought a connection to the wider world and importantly a sense of belonging.

More salient though were the practical ways in which the local congregation was a communal institution through support. The Presbyterians, as early as 1794, established a system to support the education of poorer members by organising 'collections' from every congregation within the presbytery, and after 1802 the Synod of Kentucky's, bounds to defray costs.[37] This act in itself was limited to education, yet sent an important message to the laity and to the wider community. The denomination was about saving souls and growing its numbers, yet it was also an important part of the community. In practical terms, the congregation was for many the centre of their community and the one institution to which they could turn. To that end, the congregation specifically, and more broadly the denomination as a whole, were there to support their members in any way they could. 'Collections' became a way that this support for its members could be accomplished and became an important and common occurrence within Presbyterian records. Collections were raised for everything from founding educational funds to building churches with many more acts of charity that were never recorded. The Presbyterian denomination had an unquestionable advantage over many of the other denominations in this area due to its size, organizational hierarchy and ability to spread costs over dozens of congregations yet it was not the only one and each denomination found its own solution.[38]

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37 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24 1794, UKSC.

38 William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 255, 405,409; Robert Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky : With a Preliminary Sketch of the Churches in the Valley of Virginia* (New York : R. Carter ; Lexington, Ky. : C. Marshall, 1847); Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1717 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of New York, from A.D. 1745 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, from A.D. 1758 to 1788* (Philadelphia : Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Methodists in Kentucky totalled little more than 2,500 individuals. The denomination's size was significantly smaller than that of either the Presbyterians or Baptists for much of the period. Its closest rival for members, the Baptist denomination had, in 1800, nearly double the number of individuals at 5,110. The Baptists, as well, consisted of over a hundred congregations compared to the Methodist's three circuits. Yet the Methodists faced the same challenges as the other denominations in reaching and supporting its members in the backcountry.[39]

The Methodist answer to these problems was to break with those solutions conceived by the Presbyterians and Baptists. The small number of Methodists in the state, and their distribution, meant that the building of physical churches was impracticable. Instead, the denomination focused on creating, developing, and staffing broad circuits. The denomination then assigned typically between one and three ministers known as circuit riders to an individual circuit. The minister was tasked to cover his circuit at least once a month. Each circuit was then reviewed annually at the General Conference with more successful circuits in terms of population broken up in order to provide better coverage. The system was elegant in its simplicity. At first glance, the system seems to be an *ad hoc* solution to the problem of the size and nature of settlement yet the system was much more than that.[40]

Circuits meant that there was little need for the construction of physical churches, a costly undertaking that few local Methodist classes could support. Instead, the minister conducted services wherever he stopped: be it within family cabins, local civic building and even trees were appropriated for a short time as places of worship. The other major expense for denominations, that of upkeep and support of ministers, was also solved with the circuit with such expenses being shifted from the local congregation to that of the minister. Circuit riders were, as much as possible, to pay their own way, funding themselves through the selling of religious tracts, articles and books whenever possible.[41] Ministers viewed such a move as so fundamentally

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39 Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publishers, 1946).

40 Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.* (New York : Carlton & Porter, 1796); Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* , 324–329, 431–432.

41 Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836*.

important that they were known to complain when the laity refused to accept payment from ministers for needed services. Francis Asbury complained at least once in his journal of the laity when they refused to accept this money for needed services. Of the situation, Asbury wrote that ‘We crossed Holstein at Smith' ferry, and rode thirty miles to Amie's, where we were well entertained for our money. Coming along, I complained that the people would take no pay for their food or services.’[42]

The Methodist circuit was a way to support the religious needs of any community regardless of their ability to pay. The denomination required neither a separate place of worship nor settled ministers. Yet, when needs arose, Methodists could fall back on more established means to support communities or even individuals through the raising of collections. Such an occurrence happened in May of 1790.[43] The Methodist community in Kentucky met with Asbury to discuss a significant issue. It was not the raising of a place of worship, as they saw other denominations doing, but the education of their children. After much discussion, it was proposed to raise £300.[44] How much of the proposed £300 was raised is not known, but like the Presbyterians the amount was insignificant compared to the message it brought forth. The Methodist denomination may have been relatively small in Kentucky yet it saw to the needs of its members.

The Baptist system of support for its members and its congregations was much closer to that of the Presbyterians than their rivals the Methodists. Like the Presbyterians, the Baptists developed a system that focused more directly on the congregation, leaving individuals to the support of their local congregation. The Baptists followed similar patterns to the Presbyterians establishing the denomination's first Association in June 1785.[45] The six founding congregations drafted a constitution that set out the major aim and reason for the Association declaring at their second meeting in September of 1785:

'Being assembled together, and taking into our serious consideration, what might

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42 Friday April 17 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 70.

43 May 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 73.

44 May 1790, Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 73.

45 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, June 25th 1785, SBTSS; Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

be most advantageous for the glory of God, the advancement of the Kingdom of the dear Redeemer, and the mutual comfort and happiness of the churches of Christ, having unanimously agreed to unite in the strongest bonds of Christian love and fellowship, and in order to support and keep the union do hereby adopt the Baptists confession of faith.'[46]

The idea of the Association was, at its heart, for the mutual support of the independent and individual congregations that made up the Association within the backcountry. This was a role that the Association took seriously from its very foundation. At its second meeting, held nearly a year later in August 1786, the Association was faced with its first real tests.[47] One related to the question of slaves and their standing in a congregation; the second, related to 'support of a minister whether it be considered as a debt or a liberal contribution.'[48] The response to the query on the support of ministers was postponed to the next meeting a year later. When it reconvened the following year the Association 'debated and cast out' the query resulting in no decision being reached.[49] The response to ultimately 'cast out' the question by the association is unsurprising. While the formation of the association was for mutual support of independent congregations, it could not pass any resolution that superseded that independence. To do so could have caused a split within the association or indeed within individual congregations between those who supported the association's resolution and those that did not. Such a rift would have broken local communities and caused damage to the work of the denominations. The other trial faced by the Association was a request for support for the 'destitute church at Boon Creek.'[50] The congregation was in search of basic supplies and other assorted items to help it function. The important word in this context was 'destitute.' The congregation lacked the most basic essentials to function. That suggests that the laity at such congregations could barely support themselves let alone a functioning religious body. In this, the Association came together with the congregations of Clear Creek, South Elkhorn, and Bryant's Station, all offering what they could.[51] Unlike the system of the Presbyterian

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46 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, September 1785, SBTSSC.

47 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1786, SBTSSC.

48 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1786, SBTSSC.

49 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1787, SBTSSC.

50 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1786, SBTSSC.

51 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1786, SBTSSC.

congregations that sought or offered ‘supplies’ in this context, the offer may have meant the congregations in question were offering much more. By offering support to such congregations, the Association was also offering support to the laity as a whole. The Association was taking on a burden so that the laity could survive. It may not have been direct charity but it was, never the less, charity to the poor. This was an important step in the formation of community by the Association. Through its actions of offering support it was establishing the concept of collective responsibility. Each congregation as part of the wider association was not just an island unto itself, an independent congregation, but was part of something larger, more important than itself alone. The actions of the association were demonstrating that there existed within Kentucky, a Baptist community that existed out-with the bounds of individual congregations. Individual members were part of this Kentucky-wide community by their membership in the local congregation and importantly that community meant something. It was a community that took care of its own member congregations and by extension the individuals within those congregations.

Poverty was one issue where settlers were more likely to turn to the local congregations. There were two reasons for this. First, after separation Kentucky's government did little to establish a system of poor relief or support. It took until 1793 before Kentucky's legislature passed its first act on the issue. The act limited itself to two areas. It required each county court to raise as needed 'county levy' for the support of individuals who were perceived to be 'debility or otherwise, are incapable of procuring a livelihood,'[52] and provided for orphans and 'other such children within their knowledge, whose parents they shall judge incapable of supporting and bringing them up in honest courses.'[53] Its provisions placed those children in indentured apprenticeships till their legal majority, 21 years of age for males and 18 for females. The legislation did little beyond these two areas to support poorer segments of the population.

The second reason many of Kentucky's settlers turned towards their locale congregation for support was their familiarity with the system established by Kentucky's parent state of Virginia. The Virginia House of Burgesses passed several important acts on the issue starting in 1642. That 1642 act saw the legislature define the poor, for

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52 Littel, *Statute Law of Kentucky*, Vol I 1792 to 1797, 191-192.

53 Littel, *Statute Law of Kentucky*, Vol I 1792 to 1797, 192.

perhaps the first time since the Elizabethan period, as those who were 'disabled to labour by reason of sickness, lameness or age.'[54] The legislation also made the first link within Virginia between the local parish and the poor by requiring the vestry 'to give them [the poor] a certificate to the com'rs. of the county where such poore shall reside to testifie their poverty which shall free them from all publique charges except the ministers' & parish duties [sic].'[55] From 1642 onwards it would fall to the local parish and vestry to care for their own residents. A 1727 act saw this connection reconfirmed, with the legislature firstly establishing requirements for residency, set at a minimum of one year, in a parish in law.[56] This was followed by the passage of legislation granting justices of the peace the power to remove from the parish any individual who failed to meet residency requirements if they became a financial burden.[57] The 1727 act confirmed much of the legislation passed in 1642 placing the care of the poor into the hands of the church. It would be the vestry and parish church that would be responsible for supporting those who could not support themselves.[58]

It was a system that offered the colonial government an effective way to handle poverty within its borders. It was also a system that could easily be rolled out as new counties were created, and new frontiers were opened up. The Virginia legislation that created new counties was often followed by frequent legislation that created new parishes in the counties. Handing poor relief off to the parish meant that, with the establishment of the parish, the colonial government was also establishing a system to help those most in need.

There can be little doubt that this system was intended for the newly created county of Kentucky. The 1776 legislation that created Kentucky County out of the older, larger county of Fincastle, also saw the division of the parish of Botetourt into four new

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54 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. I, 1821, 242.

55 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. I, 1821, 242.

56 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IV, 1821, 210.

57 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IV, 1821, 210.

58 Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes*, 70–84. John K Nelson in his work on the Anglican Church in Virginia has shown that care for the poor became one of the biggest expenses for each of Virginia's parishes. Using Lynnhaven as a case study Nelson argued that poor relief for the parish in Lynnhaven for 1754 was twenty-three percent of its total expenses and averaged between twelve and forty-two percent for the years between 1745-1769.

parishes.[59] The intention, it seems, was to establish in the county of Kentucky the same structures that existed in Virginia's other counties, including a system of poor relief, for the legislation finished stating: 'That nothing herein contained shall be construed to hinder the collector of the said parish of Botetourt, as the same now stands entire and undivided, from collecting and making distress for any dues that shall remain unpaid by the inhabitants of the said parish at the time of the division's taking place, but such collector shall have the same power to collect or distrain for the said dues, and shall be answerable for them in the same manner, as if this act had never been made.'[60] Though this system was never fully implemented, the required Episcopal parish in the form of Christ Church Episcopal congregation would not take root till 1809, many of Kentucky's settlers would have been familiar with it. It would not seem out of the ordinary for many of these settlers to turn not towards civil government for support but instead towards the local congregation.

Methodists, for example, focused on building circuits and moved the cost of ministry onto the minister and away from the laity while also retaining the ability to raise funds for support when necessary. The Baptists, though theologically independent, developed and used associations that strove collectively to support independent congregations. An example of this was what the congregations of Clear Creek, South Elkhorn, and Bryant's Station did for 'destitute church at Boon Creek' as early as 1786.[61]

The Episcopalians found another solution. One of the first acts of the newly established vestry was to appoint two churchwardens, John Johnson and John Wyatts in July 1809.[62] If the congregation had followed Virginia's Anglican tradition, the task of caring for the poor would have fallen to these two men in their position as churchwardens. In their position as churchwardens, these two men would have had access to various forms of mandated income from the congregation to perform their duty. Through a study of the congregation's records for its first decade, 1809-1819, finds few references, either overt or otherwise, to any poor relief, it seems that the

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59 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 257-261.

60 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 261.

61 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1786, SBTSSC.

62 Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878 [microfilm], 3rd July 1809, UKSC.

Episcopalians were taking care of their poor. One entry, though vague, in 1813 suggests that charitable causes were being dealt with. The suggestive entry states that the joint vestry and trustee council 'resolved, unanimously that, any trustee' who was found late for a meeting 'shall forfeit one dollar to the [?] by the trustees to some charitable purpose.'[63] Though a lack of any recorded poor relief, or indeed any charitable activities at all within the records of the congregation, is suggestive, its occurrence cannot fully be excluded. Records for the congregation's first few years are sparse and the lack of any surviving records from its predecessor the Episcopal Society that existed from 1796-1809 may suggest such activities were either overlooked or deemed too unimportant to record.

Finally, the Presbyterian denomination had both size and numbers on their side that allowed them to both support and to defray such costs over some forty-six congregations. This support for the poorer members of its congregations was seen through the development of a system of support in education. Presbyterians were concerned with making sure that those who were academically inclined, though from a poorer background, could still attend by having the cost defrayed over all of the congregations.[64] This system, as a model of support, was important. It offered limited support to poorer individuals and congregations by using the hierarchical and interlinked nature of Presbyterianism to fund such a system.

Settlers sought social and communal support from wherever they could find it. Some turned inward towards family, like Daniel Drake's family or the Boones, both Squire and his brother Daniel. Such settlers were fortunate and would travel and settle as complete family units and these settlers would often turn first to their immediate family for support. Others arrived in larger social groups, such as the 'Travelling church,' which moved to Kentucky and which undertook the journey as a whole community and which once arrived, in 1782, constituted itself as the Baptist congregation at Gilberts Creek.[65] For such groups, social and communal support was already present. These groups though were not the norm. For the majority of Kentucky's settlers, migration was as individuals or in nuclear family groups and consequently

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63 Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 25th November 1813, UKSC.

64 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1794, UKSC.

65 George W. Ranck, *Traveling church : an account of the Baptist exodus from Virginia to Kentucky in 1781 under the leadership of Rev. Lewis Craig and Capt. William Ellis*,49-50.

migration to the state meant a break from the broader ties of neighbourhood and kinship.[66] For these settlers, the need for support and community was evident and many found the support they needed in the local congregation. It was the one institution that settlers were able to turn to whether it was for life's milestones or for help through life's hardships. The community that settlers found within their congregation was the result of the congregation being a locally based institution. The congregation was often placed as close to where settlers settled as possible, making it the one institution that was local.

Congregation as Local:

Part of the success of camp meetings was that they were small local communal events in the lives of settlers. What began with camp meetings continued with the congregations. For many the local congregation was most likely the only prominent symbol of community and society for miles around. Other local institutions such as the court, tavern or militia, had been established, though frequently they catered only to a limited segment of the settled population, often reaching only those individuals who, in the case of taverns, were largely male and in the immediate vicinity, or of the militia, whose members were exclusively male and of enlistment age. There can be little doubt that within these subgroups such institutions were invaluable in creating a sense of community among their members. Institutions such as the militia or tavern may then have provided a community focus for some individuals, but their impact on the wider area and among the broader population of settlers was relatively limited. For a significant portion of the population that did not fall within the scope of these institutions, often the only alternative was the local congregation.

That the congregation was local should be unsurprising. The traditions of Virginia that saw the establishment of county-wide parishes, often locating the central church near the centre of the county, regardless of where in the county larger settlements such as Lexington, Harrodsburgh, and Boonesbourgh had been established. Kentucky should have followed suit. However, in Kentucky the denominations took great care to establish congregations where settlers were. Many of the Baptist congregations, for example Marble Creek or Tates Creek, bore the name of the closest

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66 Elizabeth A Perkins and Shane, John Dabney, *Border Life Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 112; Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 36–38; Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 110–112.

water course, suggesting that this was the most prominent feature around. The Virginia legislation of 1776, that created the County of Kentucky, provided for the establishment of such a parish at the same time. Enacted in the closing days of 1776, the parish envisioned by this law would have pertained solely to Virginia's only sanctioned denomination, the Anglican Church. However, many of Kentucky's other denominations unburdened by the social and government obligations of a Virginia parish that the Anglican Church faced were free to establish congregations where settlers had actually settled instead.

One of the first acts of the Transylvania Presbytery in 1786, for example, was 'to seek after and give proper encouragement to the members of our society scattered up and down in small settlements; to assist in organizing and supplying them as far as our circumstances will allow.'[67] The wording of the act was strikingly similar to that of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia seven years earlier in 1779. The Hanover Presbytery of Virginia, which then had jurisdiction over Kentucky, requested 'that some missionaries might be sent into the state of Virginia [ie Kentucky] to preach the gospel, and especially that a few ministers of genius, prudence, and address, might spend some considerable time in attempting to form that people into regular congregations, under the discipline and government of the Presbyterian church, and to settle among them, and undertake the education of their youth.'[68] Further the Hanover Presbytery asked that the Synod 'pay a particular attention to the southern and western parts of this continent; that congregations which may be formed there will be permanent and fixed.'[69] The response of the Synod would set the tone and *modus operandi* for much of the rest of the denomination's expansion into the American West.

Ministers destined for the new territories were often ordained *sine titulo,* without title. The role these ministers were tasked with was not that of the typical parish minister, overseeing the spiritual needs of long-established congregations and they were not to serve a specific congregation. Instead, their role entailed responsibilities more

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67 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

68 Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1717 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of New York, from A.D. 1745 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, from A.D. 1758 to 1788* (Philadelphia : Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), 484.

69 Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716*, 484.

commonly associated with those of missionaries with their focus on the proselytization, and the laying of groundwork for the formation of nascent congregations. Importantly, these ministers were supported by established older presbyteries that covered their expenses and salaries.[70] This was an innovative solution to the problem of supplying ministers to the region for the denomination, or for many other Protestant denominations. Such denominations were more comfortable with a tradition of placing ministers within already established congregations, congregations that would cover the expense of the minister. For the Synod or a presbytery to take on the cost of the minister was unheard of outside the realm of religious orders of the Catholic Church such as the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), Franciscans, or Dominicans. Yet Hanover Presbytery requested just that system when it went to the larger synod in 1782.

The Hanover Presbytery followed both the guidance of the Synod and its own request in 1782. The Rev. David Rice, then a member of Hanover Presbytery in the Piedmont of Virginia, presented the Presbytery a petition he had received 'subscribed by three hundred men' from Kentucky requesting his services.[71] Rice moved to Danville Kentucky in October of 1783 and spent much of the first year ministering and preaching to the dispersed communities of Presbyterians there.[72] No mention is found in Rice's memoirs of who paid his salary during this period, for he had a young family to support, but it is likely that it was the Hanover Presbytery. Rice remained tied to his roots in Virginia and was, until the founding of the Transylvania Presbytery in October of 1786, a member in good standing of the Hanover Presbytery.[73] In sending Rice westward, the Hanover Presbytery was making the first inroads to supporting nascent Presbyterianism in the trans-Appalachian west. Other ministers such as Thomas Craighead, Adam Rankin, Terah Tamplin, Andrew McClure, and James Crawford soon followed Rice.[74] The presbytery was ordaining ministers and sending them westward, not to a particular

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70 Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716*, 484.

71 Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 67.

72 McAfee, Robert B., Clerk, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the first settlements on Salt River, and Establishment of the New Providence Church*, DM14CC102; Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68-69.

73 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

74 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

congregation but to the wider territory and was also paying their expenses.

Such support quickly paid dividends, for within a year Rice established three places of worship at Danville, Cane Run, and Forks of Dicks River.[75] The choice of these three places was important. These locations were neither significant settlements nor prestigious ones such as Boonesborough, Harrodsburgh, or Lexington. They were, however, located in areas where significant populations of Presbyterians could be found. Each was located away from the significant settlements of the period: Cane Ridge was some seven miles North East of Lexington while Danville was ten miles South West of Harrodsburgh and thirty-five miles South of Lexington. Forks of Dicks River was even further away at twenty miles from Harrodsburgh. Of the three, only Danville was close to any major route used by settlers during the period. Such placement of congregations by the Presbyterians was a statement of the importance of building congregations where settlers were located and not where it may have been politically ideal. Indeed, between Danville and Cane Ridge was a route of some sixty miles between the two parishes that he was ultimately responsible for, yet Rice found it important to establish such dispersed congregations.

This pattern of establishing congregations where settlers were settled rather than spreading equally across Kentucky continued with congregations established at sixteen locations by 1786. These were the congregations of Salem, New Providence, Harbison, Whitley, Hanging Fork, Paint Lick, Ewing, Stoner, Kingston, North Fork of Elkhorn, South Fork of Elkhorn, Glen's Creek, Hopewells, Gasper River, Muddy River, and Red River.[76] The pattern seemed to be of such importance to the denomination, as a whole, that less than a decade later in 1793 the Transylvania Presbytery, the direct descendent of Hanover Presbytery, saw fit to pass regulations to limit where new congregations should be founded. The regulation required a new congregation to seek the permission of the full presbytery if it was to be founded closer than 10 miles to any established one.[77] The actions of the Presbytery suggest that this model of establishing congregations where settlers were found, rather than in consideration of the geography of Kentucky, had been of great use to the denomination. This policy had been so

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75 McAfee, Robert B., Clerk, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the first settlements on Salt River, and Establishment of the New Providence Church,* DM14CC102; Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68-69.

76 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

77 Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm] UKSC.

successful that new congregations were springing up faster than the presbytery could handle. The regulation though had other intentions as well. By regulating where and when new congregations were being established, the presbytery was beginning to provide a network that extended beyond the bounds of a single congregation. In short, the regulation was beginning to turn the congregation into a system that was geographical in scope. The presbytery, by limiting where and when new congregations could be established, was following an ancient practice of the parish.[78]

The parish, by the time of Kentucky's creation, was a well-established principle. Its roots can be traced to the Anglo-Catholic concepts of organizing local territorial churches. This process defined the parish as 'a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor.'[79] The Church of England held similar views requiring all individuals within the bounds of a parish to pay taxes towards the upkeep of the parish. This arrangement though was bidirectional requiring the parish to look after the spiritual needs of all those under its care. The parish was to be territorial in nature, both containing and constituting all individuals within its bounds.

Other denominations though, and indeed other clergy beyond the Episcopalians and Catholic traditions, would have recognized this formula and found it useful. Indeed similar formulas of organization could have been found in the traditions of the Presbyterians, within the *First Book of Discipline* (1560) and *The Second Book of Discipline* (1578) which defined and organized the Church of Scotland after the Reformation, as well as the Methodists who, until the Christmas Conference of 1784 had its roots within the wider Anglican/Episcopalian tradition.

The Methodist circuits carved out of Kentucky, and continuously refined over the years, were both analogous to the parish in structure while also local in nature. Each circuit had a geographical boundary in which the rider was to work.[80] All those settlers who fell within the boundary were, by accident of their geography, part of the circuit. While circuits could be geographically large, and the first circuit in Kentucky covered

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78 Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 69.

79 Code of Canon Law, c.515, §1, in The Code of Canon Law: Latin English Edition (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983).

80 December 1796, T*he Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church vol .1, 1796-1836* (New York, Carlton & Philips, 1855) 11-19.

much of the latter state, the denomination was nevertheless local in nature. During this period, Methodism in Kentucky was structured in the same way as elsewhere in the United States, with ministers establishing local class meetings within larger circuits. Classes were often small in size consisting of a handful of laity each, often meeting in the house of the class leader or elder. This creation of classes turned a denomination that was regional in structure to one that was local in nature.[81]

Regional and the General Conferences, held either quarterly or yearly, may have shaped circuits and passed regulations for the development of the denomination. Yet, for the average member these conferences had little impact. It was the local class meeting that had the most impact on their lives. This idea of being local did not end at the class meeting as the circuit-rider conducted services wherever he stopped; be it within family cabins, local civic buildings, or even trees being appropriated for a short time as places of worship. Asbury during his travels through the state kept up this tradition by holding his own services often where his circuit-riding minister did. For example, during his trip from May 9-22, 1790, Asbury held religious services six times, five of which were explicitly held in the homes of followers.[82] Asbury even went as far as to hold the local conference of that year in the home of one settler recalling 'Our conference was held at brother Materson's, a very comfortable house, and kind people.'[83] Holding religious services locally, and often in the homes of congregation members, was of such importance that, when given a chance during the conference, the denomination chose to invest money not in the creation of a meeting house but instead in the establishment of the first Methodist school for the region.

The pattern of creating local congregations was used to greatest effect by the Baptists. The creation of a Baptist congregation was a relatively straightforward process, only requiring a handful of like-minded individuals to come together in

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81 August 1st 1796, T*he Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church vol .1, 1796-1836* (New York, Carlton & Philips, 1855) 11-19; Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (3d ed.; 4 vols.; New York, 1839), I, 74; Robert Emory, *History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1844), 211-12; Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* , 373–374.

82 Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 73–75.

83 Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 74.

community. The foundation of Bryant's Station in April of 1786 was typical of this.[84] Eight people, four men and four women, in the words of the congregation's later record 'in the neighbourhood of Bryant's on the North Elkhorn having several times Considered [sic] their scattered state, and the want to Discipline [sic] among themselves, after mature Deliberation [sic]' came together for the first time as a congregation.[85] Bryant's Station's congregation then called upon two established congregations, South Elkhorn and Big Crossing for both help in and witness to the establishment of the congregation. The last step in the process was for each member to accept the Philadelphia Confession and agree upon an accepted constitution. From that point on, the congregation of Bryant's Station was formally formed.

This simple and straightforward process allowed the denomination to form new congregations with relative ease. This it did, whenever the need arose. At its founding in 1785, the Elkhorn Association had just four congregations (South Elkhorn, Clear Creek, Big Crossing, and Gilberts Creek) in total.[86] Five years later, in 1790, the number of congregations had grown to 14.[87] Finally, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the number of congregations had risen to 31.[88] The Elkhorn Association was but one of three active associations within Kentucky between 1790 and 1800, and in total, by 1790, there were 42 active congregations within Kentucky. Each new congregation was the result of local Baptists coming together with a desire to form a local congregation. Many of these new congregations were direct outgrowths of older more established congregations that had grown too large. William Hickman's congregation of the Forks of Elkhorn was part of South Elkhorn until it formed itself into a separate congregation in 1788, while the Cave Spring congregation, later renamed Stony Point, was formed in 1791 with 13 members from Hanging Fork congregation.[89] Finally, Marble Creek, founded in June of 1787, was formed out of the older congregation at Boone's Creek.[90]

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84 Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, KHS.

85 Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, KHS.

86 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, June 25th 1785, SBTSSC.

87 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 27th 1790, SBTSSC.

88 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, May 30th 1788, SBTSSC.

89 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, May 30th 1788, SBTSSC; Stony Point Baptist Church Monthly Register, 1802-1850, May 1781, KHS.

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Recalling the event, the congregation wrote 'Being dismissed from Boons [sic] and Constituted upon the Confession of Faith This 15th Day of June 1787 – By the assistance of our Brethren S. Smith and Ambrose Dudley who constituted this Church then Consisting of Nineteen Members... Those members then being Confirmed as a Church Proceeded to make their Own Rules.'[91] At its founding, the congregation had nineteen members, yet the process was the same as the founding of Bryant's Station.

Baptist theological understanding meant that smaller congregations were a common feature of the denomination in general, with larger more established congregations breaking up into smaller even more local congregations over time. Forks of Elkhorn Baptist congregation was, for example, founded in 1788 as an arm of the larger and older South Elkhorn Baptist congregation.92 Whilst Marble Creek congergation, latter reformed as East Hickman, was founded in 1787 with nineteen members out of Boone's Creek.[93] A study of the data from Elkhorn Association between 1788 and 1798 suggests an average congregation size of less than one hundred adult individuals. This was a trend that continued for much of the early Nineteenth Century. Data from Licking Association in 1810 confirms as much. At its founding, the association had eleven congregations with a membership total of 764.[94] This resulted in an average congregation size of 69.44 members per congregation. Nine years later in 1819 the Association had nearly doubled in size with 21 congregations in its association and 1147 members, averaging 54 members per congregation.[95]

A study of both the Baptist associations and the Presbyterian presbyteries suggests that the local congregation was of vital importance for settlers. Regardless of how the local congregations were created, whether through regulation, such as the Presbyterians, or through the result of a group of individuals coming together and willing its creation, such as the Baptists, within Kentucky there were few institutions that were as common or as immediately present in the lives of most settlers as the local congregation. There where even fewer institutions that could cater for so many different

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91 Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], June 1787, KHS.

92 Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], June 1787, KHS.

93 Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, 1788, KHS.

94 Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842: [minutes], June 1787, KHS.

95 Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1810, KHS.

Licking Association of Baptist Records 1810-1901, August 1819, KHS.

people, from the very young to the elderly and from slaves to free. The congregations were readily open to all segments of the population.

The importance of the local congregation began with the concept that local congregations were a limited and defined geographical entity. Kentucky's counties were, from the start, large expanses of land. The original County of Kentucky established by the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1776 was some 40,000 square miles in area. Kentucky County was abolished four years later when three new counties (Fayette, Jefferson, and Lincoln) were created. Though the territory was not evenly distributed between the three new counties, on average each still constituted roughly 13,300 square miles in area. The result was that, though smaller in size, these counties were still geographically immense. In order to properly function, the denominations needed smaller, easier to manage, geographical areas. The local congregation accomplished the establishment of these sections. Community was often understood as having a common or shared bond; be it a shared history, a shared custom, a shared morality, a shared ethnicity, or even a shared distrust.96 Community was, in short, that which offered a collection of individuals a common or shared identity and that importantly united and tied each member into a unique group.120 Kentucky's settlers came from all parts of the young republic and often lacked either common history, or common customs. The civil authority or society had yet to create a common structure to which settlers could attach themselves and find belonging.

Such a structuring by the denominations on the frontier was a way in which they were able to foster a sense of a wider community for their followers. This was a sense of community that was more present in the lives of settlers than the boundaries established by civil authority. Beyond a shared common theology, multiple sites of worship under the offices of one, or in rare cases, by small groups of ministers, offered settlers who were often spread out over the territory something in common with one another. Camp meetings began this process of bringing settlers together. Yet the local congregation offered the denominations a way to organise society in Kentucky in a manner that allowed them to function best. As a social institution, their importance was that of offering settlers a common focal point on which to build lasting relationships and a

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Stephen Mennell, *The American Civilizing Process*, 1 edition (Polity, 2007), 6.

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Stephen Mennell, *The American Civilizing Process*, 1 edition (Polity, 2007),6 ; Beeman, ‘The New Social History and the Search for “Community” in Colonial America’, *American Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1977): 422–43

shared history. A relationship that went importantly beyond familial or marital bounds, bonds of blood, out to the wider community. The concept of the Godparent or Baptismal Sponsor, for those denominations that did not engage in infant or child baptism, is a useful example of how the denominations created lasting relationships within the community. The use of Godparents created a strong fictive kin networks between families, branching out the obligations of passing on the faith and traditions of the community to a child to a wider segment of the congregation. It was, to use a common saying, creating the very village needed to raise the child. Those bonds were extra-familial yet by using terms such as parent and God together they created bonds that transcended temporal relationships. The Godparent or Baptismal Sponsor was personally responsible for the moral upbringing or education of the individual.

The congregation was both importantly local and communal. It was often the one institution that was directly present in the lives of settlers. Membership of such an institution was important for this reason alone. The local congregation was often the only real and present form of community for settlers. Membership though offered something else to settlers. It offered access to denominational institutions that acted as effective alternatives to civil institutions that were either not present or ineffectual for settlers. A study of one such institution, education, will provide an example of how congregations became much more for settler than just places of worship.

Education:

The denominations occupied a place within the backcountry where civil institutions were unable to keep up with the fast-paced expansion that had been occurring since the earliest days of settlement. Their intention may not have been to become the agents of society and the creators of community, yet to meet their own ends they became just that. The local congregation became a focal point for many as the only major institution that both kept pace with settlement and offered a sense of security. The creation and development of camp meetings offered the denominations a way to reach beyond their own congregations to a wider body of settlers. The development and use of social structures such as educational institutions, societies, and support programmes formed these strangers into community. It was not only in providing a needed sense of community that the congregations served many of the social needs of their communities. Perhaps the most important way that they did this was by the provision of basic education.

In the April session of 1794, the Transylvania presbytery tabled and passed a resolution requiring its ministers to 'earnestly recommend... to those under their care that they encourage learning as much as possible.'[97] To that end, the presbytery ordered the 'appoint[ment of] one grammar school within their bounds.'[98] The presbytery went further setting up a board of trustees appointing the Rev.'s 'David Rice, James Crawford, James Blythe, Robert Patterson, and John Caldwell' as its first members, while also creating a system in which poorer students would be able to attend.[99] The presbytery also ordered each congregation within its bounds to work toward defraying the overall cost of the new school.[100] It should be of little surprise that Kentucky's Presbyterians took an interest in education. The need for education was of paramount importance to many in Kentucky by that time. Advertisements within the *Kentucky Gazette* as early as 1787, and which were continuously carried for much of the rest of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries, lay testament to the importance of education. Such advertisements covered everything from the founding of new academies and schools, to the services of private tutors and the availability of schoolbooks. In all, between its first edition in 1787, and December of 1793, there were fifteen separate announcements for the opening of various schools and academies within Kentucky, along with over a hundred other references to education within its pages. Importantly, however, a majority of these educational institutions were privately run, and often were designed primarily as a source of income for the founders. For middle class and wealthy settlers, the field of education was wide open. Yet little had been done to meet Kentucky settlers' educational needs beyond a handful of legislation in 1780's that established the Transylvania Seminary, and a few private institutions.[101]

Indeed, the act in question did little more than set aside 'eight thousand acres of land...for the purpose of a publick school, or a seminary of learning, to be erected within the said county as soon as, the circumstances of the county and the state of its funds, will admit.'[121] The act entrusted thirteen of Kentucky's leading men, among them

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97 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1794, UKSC.

98 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1794, UKSC.

99 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1794, UKSC.

100 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1794, UKSC.

101 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. X, 1821, 287-288, 283.

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members of the Todd, Logan, Cobb, and Fleming families, to act as trustees of the land.[122] Three years later in 1783 the legislature again took up the issue of education in Kentucky but did little more than both expand the act of 1780 and in the process established the Transylvania Seminary. The newly formed seminary was granted an additional twelve thousand acres of land to the already eight thousand set aside. The original thirteen trustees, along with an additional twelve, were created into the seminary's first board of trustees.[123] The lack of any mention of grammar schools within either piece of legislation, as well as, the failure of Kentucky's later independent legislature to provide any system of public education or schooling until well into the nineteenth century, left a void that needed to be filled. Kentucky's settlers found, again like that of an alternative court system, this within the denominations. With the state providing little access to education for ordinary Kentucky settlers, it was left to the denominations to fill the void.

Kentucky's Presbyterians were at the forefront of these developments. The very theology and form of Calvinism at the bedrock of the denomination argued for the importance of an educated clergy and laity. It should be of little surprise then that their clergy, such as the Rev. David Rice, were from the start members of the board of trustees for the Transylvania Seminary, as well as, educators within the school.[124] They were the major driving force behind the establishment of its rival, the Kentucky Academy, a few years later in 1796.

The first formal step the denomination took in the direction of creating an education system for Kentucky occurred in 1794. In its April meeting of that year the Transylvania Presbytery 'resolved, that [the] presbytery appoint one grammar school within their bounds' as well as a board of trustees to supervise.[125] Tuition for the new grammar school was to be set at four pounds per annum, resulting in the new grammar school being twenty percent cheaper than the average for the period.[126] The average

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122 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. X, 1821, 287-288.

123 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. X, 1821, 288.

124 Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. X, 1821, 282- 287

125 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1790, UKSC.

126 Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 24th 1790, UKSC.

This figure was arrived at through a study of announcements found within the pages of the Kentucky Gazette between 1787 and 1793. Each time a new add was place for a new school within Kentucky

tuition for other schools, during the period, was typically set at between £5 and £6 per annum, paid half in cash and half in goods on a quarterly basis.[127] Though not a free educational institution, the presbytery was concerned with making sure that those who were academically inclined, though from a poorer background, could still attend by asking its member congregations to defray the cost of tuition for such students. With some forty-six congregations under its control the average congregation would have been responsible for 20.8 pence of each student's tuition. Though not an insignificant sum for the period, this system would not have been as burdensome as first glance suggests. The average congregation size for the period averaged between fifty and a hundred individuals. Even at the lower end this would have resulted in cost of about one-half of a penny per person per scholar per year. Such a system had an important impact in opening access to education to any who were intellectually able regardless of their or their family's financial situation.

The denomination's efforts though did not end there. Ministers on an individual basis took it upon themselves often to run their own educational institutions. The foundations of the Transylvania Seminary and its later incarnation as Transylvania University were founded in the Rev. David Rice's house in the early 1780's, long before it was granted the land and status it would later acquire. Others were more modest in their endeavours for example, the Rev. James Crawford, one of Rice's contemporaries, established his own grammar school close to his congregation at Walnut Hill in 1791.[128] Crawford seems to have been more cautious than Rice, choosing to hire one Hugh Wilson to teach at least some of the courses, Latin and Greek in particular, while he oversaw much of the rest. Finally, still others limited themselves to Sunday schools where the basics of reading the Bible would have been taught. Teaching children and young adults to read the Bible also meant more broadly teaching them to read, and the lessons offered by Sunday schools were for many children the only formal schooling they received.

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127 the amount of tuition was noted and an average was arrived at. In total between 1787 and 1793 there were 14 such adds posted with the average tuition placed between £5 and £6 per year.

128 *Kentucky Gazette*, 1787-1793, KDL; The *Kentucky Gazette,* for example, saw one announcement placed in the January 5th, 1788 edition announced that a new school was to be opened by misters 'Jones and Worlev, at the Royal Spring in Lebanon town, Fayette county' for some fifty or sixty students. The course of study would include Latin, Greek, and the sciences. It was though a private institution with tuition set at twenty-five shillings a quarter paid half in cash and the rest in goods.

Kentucky Gazette, January 22 1791. KDL.

Indeed, Sunday or Sabbath schools, as they were sometimes known, were to be the basic form of education for many early settlers. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, which oversaw the Hanover Presbytery which in turn held control of the territory of Kentucky, passed a resolution in 1785 on 'the education of youth, and their being early instructed in just principles...'[129] The resolution required all Presbyteries to establish at least one school within its bounds and importantly make special efforts to establish schools at every 'vacant congregation' under its control.[130] Ministers in turn were required quarterly to make reports on all congregational schools to the presbytery.[131] The resolution in short turned every congregation into a school and every minister into an educator.

The Presbyterian plan for education was broad reaching, seeming to cover nearly every aspect of the field as far as possible from the local congregational school to seminaries and institutions of higher education, with the founding of the Transylvania Seminary and its rival the Kentucky Academy. Yet the Presbyterians were only one of several denominations in Kentucky who saw education as important and engaged in such ventures. For example both the Methodists and Baptists also sought, to lesser extents, to fill the void of education for their members.

The Methodist venture into education in Kentucky began five years before that of the Transylvania Presbytery in 1790. Under the guidance of the Rev. Francis Asbury the denomination established in principle an outline for a new school in May of that year.[132] Marking the event Asbury wrote of the time: 'We fixed a plan for a school, and called it *Bethel*; and obtained a subscription of upwards of £300, in land and money, towards it establishment.'[133] The establishment of such a school was an important

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129 23rd May 1785, Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716,* 51.

130 23rd May 1785, Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716,* 484.

131 23rd May 1785, Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716,* 484.

132 Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815 vol 2* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 74.

133 Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815 vol 2* (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 74.

physical symbol for the Methodists in Kentucky. The few surviving records for the denomination during this period suggest that, at best, there may have been only one physical church building constructed belonging to the denomination.[134] This was during a period when the other denominations deemed it of more importance to construct physical churches in order to reap the benefits such enterprises offered to their denominations.[135] Yet, the Methodists chose instead to focus their time, energy, and importantly money, towards, not a physical church or meetinghouse, but instead to that of a school. For the Methodists within Kentucky *Bethel's* physical structure would act in much the same way as a physical church, representing for the denomination a symbol of stability and of permanence.

The choice of name for the new school was both an important choice and symbol as well. *Bethel* from the Hebrew read as *House of El*, or more accurately *House of God.* The name implied much, suggesting an important link between the denomination and education. It suggests that for the denomination as a whole, education was of prime importance. This may have been in part due to the importance book and pamphlet sales played in supporting circuit riders. An educated laity would have had more use of books and pamphlets, especially in backcountry territories where such goods were hard to come by. Whatever the intentions were, the plan for a school would have been welcomed by many. At the time of its planning, Bethel would have been the only significant competition to the Presbyterian-run system.

Finally, the Baptists also took up the issue of education during this period. Baptist interpretation of Calvinist theology, unlike their counterparts within the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican/ Episcopalian traditions, argued strongly for ministers who were theologically uneducated. More precisely, these were ministers who were 'uncorrupted' by theological training found within Presbyterian ministerial ranks or indeed that of the self-taught circuit-riders of the Methodist. Instead, Baptist congregations often sought what has been referred to as Farmer-preachers to minister to their congregations. The farmer-preacher model of ministry worked well for the denomination as a whole during the period. Baptist numbers within Kentucky grew quickly from a handful of families and congregations in 1785 to several thousand by

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134 Rev. W.E. Arnold, *A History of Methodism in Kentucky.*, vol. I: From 1783–1820 (Herald Press, 1935), 46–47.

135 For a more in-depth discussion on the benefits the denominations found in constructing physical churches see chapter 4: The Church page 126.

century's end.[136] To interpret this, as some have, that the denomination was not supportive of education is in many ways absurd. The very nature of Baptist theology, and the groundwork on which it was heavily reliant, *Sola scriptura*, that of private interpretation and reading of the Bible. Of all the major denominations within Kentucky they uniquely were dependent on, at least a moderately, literate congregation in order to properly function. To deny this basic skill set would have been detrimental to Baptist tradition.

Yet, whilst believing that their ministers should not be educated in the same manner as Presbyterian, Methodist, or even Episcopalian ministers, records suggest that for their children, Baptists did see a central need for education. Some congregations, such as the Baptist congregation of the Forks of Elkhorn, built and maintained separate school buildings. An entry in records for October 1805 saw the congregation raise a subscription to 'Repair the Schoolhouse which is in partnership between the Church and Subscribers.'[137] A few years later in 1810 the schoolhouse in question once again needed repairs, this time its chimney.[138] No mention survives of when the schoolhouse was first built, but the need to repair the schoolhouse every five years would suggest that it was first built in the close of the 1790's or the opening years of the 1800's, during the same period as both the establishment of the Presbyterian schools and the Methodist *Bethel* academy.

Not all Baptist congregations could, or indeed did, build separate schools. This though would not have been an impediment for the layout of Baptists churches would have been optimal for the needs of many congregations unlike the layout of Presbyterian churches in particular. Indeed, for many congregations education would have taken the form of Sunday or Sabbath schools where specifically the reading the Bible would have been taught. Of all the major denominations within Kentucky, the Baptists were uniquely dependent on a congregation that was at least moderately literate in order to function properly. This is borne out by a query raised by the Marble Creek congregation within the Elkhorn Association in August 1798.[139] The question raised by Marble Creek was 'Whether it is consistent with our duty to God and our Children until

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136 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, June 1785-1795, SBTSSC.

137 Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, October 1805, KHS.

138 Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, November 1810, KHS.

139 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1798, SBTSSC.

they are well acquainted with [sic] read the scriptures?'[140] This question by the Marble Creek congregation must have been part of a wider and long-running persistent debate within the congregation as a whole for the records for the congregation prior to the August meeting of the Association only state 'Br. Wood & Price prepare a Letter in behalf of this Church to send to s'd Ass'on [sic].'[141] No mention was made in the records in the year before, or after the August meeting of the association, of the debate suggesting it was a common enough occurrence as to not warrant wasting paper and ink in detailing the debate as a whole. The answer came down that other texts 'tho' of human institution if moral in their nature' could be used.[142] The answer, like the question itself, never made it into the congregation's records after the meeting, suggesting the answer was seen as satisfactory. The importance of the question was not whether education was of use to the Baptists, it was, but how far and what tools might be used in education within the overall Baptist traditions.

Collectively, each of Kentucky's denominations took an important and significant role in the field of education during Kentucky's early years. Each denomination had their own reasons for establishing and educating settlers, especially outside the few larger settlements that existed. Baptists, for example, needed a literate laity in order to communicate fully its theology. Presbyterians needed a highly educated clergy to meet long-established expectations of highly educated and literate ministers its laity had. Methodists established schools in order to progress the basic tenets set forth by their founders, the brothers Wesley, and goals of Francis Asbury. Education was a tool to this end and not a means unto itself. Yet the end result was an educational system, from grammar school through to higher education, being created within a handful of years after the first settlers arrived. A system that, when civil society was able to catch up, folded, with little difficulty, into secular society. Transylvania Seminary, for example, established in the Rev. David Rice's home in the early 1780's, became Transylvania University in 1789. The ultimate purpose of the denominations though was not to make the transition from backcountry to civil society easier but to grow their own denominations at the local congregational level. By establishing schools, be they Sunday or Bible schools, or higher education institutions such as

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140 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1798, SBTSSC.

141 Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], July 1798, KHS.

142 Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1798, SBTSSC.

seminaries, they strengthened the association in the minds of their congregations that the denomination was the provider of society. From cradle to grave the denomination through the local congregation was the centre of their world. Education became just one more tool that helped bring about this connection.[143]

Conclusion:

The denominations were for many settlers central to their day-to-day lives, offering stability and a sense of community that no other institution, civil or otherwise, could or was able to provide. Yet this system of support and stability would only function if individuals were active members. In other words, that system of stability and community that the denominations offered would only properly function if the laity joined in community. The denominations and their ministers realized they needed to reach a broader segment of the population and engaged settlers on their own terms. Camp meetings were the start of that process, reaching out to settlers who might not have otherwise joined the community found during the local Sabbath service. Camp meetings though, as has been argued, were temporary in nature occurring over only a handful of years during, the late 1790's and early and 1800's, and lasting only a few months each year. The local congregation became the natural successor for the work started by these meetings. It was there the local congregation that settlers found a community that was both local and had ties to the wider society. Settlers quickly found within their local congregations useful and functional alternatives to civil institutions.

Ultimately, each denomination tried to reach the broadest segment of the population that they could. Camp meetings were one way that many settlers were first introduced to the denominations but it was through such systems on offer that many stayed after the euphoria of such meetings wore off. The denominations quickly realized that though settlers found reasons to stay, they need to find a way to strengthen the bonds of community that had been created. The next chapter will focus on this in particular, examining the importance physical churches had on denominations.

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Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Fronier* (Chicago U.P, n.d.), 77–123; Thomas Dionysius Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (Ashland, KY: J. Stuart Foundation, 1992).

Chapter Four

The Church:

The establishment of physical church structures, strengthened and cemented what began with camp meetings and was continued in the formation of congregations.[1] Through camp meetings and the creation of local congregations, the denominations were, for many settlers, the focal points of their community. These denominations offered stability and a sense of community that often no other institution, civil or otherwise, was able to provide. Frequently that stability and community between settlers at the local level first presented itself in the common connections of both a shared theology and a minister. Congregations added to this by quickly taking on functions of society beyond that of the normal Sabbath service. The role of the church courts and Sunday schools are useful examples of this. In doing so, the local congregation became, for many settlers, the institution most present in their daily lives. By establishing and building a physical church the local congregation also became visibly present in the lives of settlers in a way that few other institutions in the backcountry could.

The work of camp meetings and local congregations was but one part of the process. They were the emotional and social connections that settlers sought, but they could be fluid and transitory in nature. Camp meetings, for example, occurred over only a few weeks or at most months of each year. Local congregations, however, although quickly becoming important to settlers, often lacked the ability to tie individuals to their immediate location. The Baptists, in particular, had problems preventing the congregations from splintering as individuals and families moved outside the geographical bounds of the local congregation. That congregations like Bryant's Station found it necessary, as early as 1786, to explicitly prohibit such movement within the founding rules of decorum for the congregation suggests that it was a regular occurrence within congregations.[2]

The construction of a physical church building became the solution for many of

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[1]With in this thesis the term church has been narrowly defined as the physical building a denomination or local congregation built and who's primary purpose was for religious services. For a more extensive discussion on this definition see the Introduction chapter section on definitions.

[2]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 15th April, 1786, Kentucky Historical Society Special Collections, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter KHS).

these problems. A physical church building took time and was expensive to construct, yet, it played a significant role in creating stability and growth for those congregations that built one. The ways in which a physical church structure did this are central to this chapter. This chapter will examine, in detail, how the denominations through the construction of church buildings, as well as their hierarchical organisational and leadership structures were best able to bind Kentucky settlers together. The discussion will be divided into two parts: firstly, an examination of how building a physical church often created stability within a congregation and helped cement developing ideas of communities, and secondly, how the internal layout of a church might strengthen the bonds of community within a congregation.

The first portion of the chapter will start at the very roots of the churches examining their physical structures and demonstrating how, through the act of building a church, the denominations were able to foster a sense of community. In particular, it will examine how through the process of building a physical church, congregations were able to create a sense of belonging and ownership within the community. The chapter will then consider how both the financial commitments and the commitment in time often made such congregations more stable than their counterparts who did not undertake such a process.

The discussion will then move on to a study of the layout of these newly built churches, examining in detail how such layouts played a role in strengthening an already established sense of belonging and community within these congregations. Finally, the chapter will examine how the internal governance of each church, the vestries, church councils and meetings, the election of elders, and the choosing of ministers further helped solidify the sense of community.

Church Buildings:

In the January 19, 1787 edition of the *Kentucky Gazette*, buried deep on the second page, was posted a small advertisement. The advertisement gave 'notice' to those of the Lexington Presbyterian Church that their subscription for the building of the church was due.[3] The building of churches in Kentucky during much of this early period was, for many congregations, a monumental undertaking. Congregations were

[3]*Kentucky Gazette* Saturday 19th January 1787, 2. Digitised scans of Lexington's *Kentucky Gazette* from 1787 to 1840, can be accessed online from: 'Kentuckiana Digital Library,' http://kdl.kyvl.org. (hereafter KDL).

often small and currency was limited, payment, for example, for the Presbyterian construction was to be accepted in kind with preference given to pork and corn 'as those articles [were] immediately wanted for the workmen'.[4]Church building was an expensive undertaking as evidenced by a similar posting some seventeen months later.[5] Here again, within the pages of the *Kentucky Gazette* this time on June 7, 1788, Lexington's Presbyterians were 'earnestly requested... to pay up immediately, as the workmen are pushing for their pay.'[6] However, despite the high cost, congregations chose, when possible, to build meetinghouses and church structures regardless. The reasons were as varied as the denominations who built them, from liturgical and theological, as in the case of Roman Catholic theology that required a consecrated place of worship, to logistical in the case of the Presbyterians' first congregation that required three separate places of worship because of the distances involved. Yet one of the more significant and important consequences, though little discussed, was the creation of a sense of community.[7]

Church construction was an expensive and time-consuming undertaking for any congregation. The Presbyterian Church in Lexington was typical of this and as a model can offer useful insight. The congregation took more than seventeen months to add an addition to an already existing building.[8] The expansion was expensive as well for the congregation. Church records demonstrate that many of these early subscriptions failed

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[4]*Kentucky Gazette* Saturday 19th January 1787, KDL.

[5]*Kentucky Gazette* Saturday 19th January 1787, KDL.

[6] *Kentucky Gazette* Saturday 19th January 1787, KDL.

[7]John Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith : With Introduction and Notes* (Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1881); William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936); Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1717 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of New York, from A.D. 1745 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, from A.D. 1758 to 1788* (Philadelphia : Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841); 'The Basic Sixteen Documents Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: Austin Flannery: 9780918344373: Books', accessed 12 December 2015; 'Catechism of the Catholic Church: Libreria Editri Vaticana: 9781574551105: Books', accessed 12 December 2015; Bartholomew C. Okonkwo, *Documents of the Second Vatican Council: Translation of Latin Original by the Holy See* (Lexington, KY? CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012); John R Dichtl, *Frontiers of Faith Bringing Catholicism to the West in the Early Republic* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* (London: Methuen, 1992).

[8]*Kentucky Gazette*, Saturday 19th January 1787, KDL; Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], January 1787, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

to cover the cost of the build. Nor was this a unique problem for the Presbyterians. The Baptist congregation, at Marble Creek, recorded at least three different subscriptions raised over a four-year period (1789-1793) for the building, maintenance and upkeep of a meetinghouse, with the first of these three subscriptions worth more than £20 per congregation either in property, livestock, or cash, a significant sum during this period.[9] No records survive to detail the total for the other two subscriptions, but one would doubt they would have been much lower, suggesting that the congregation raised between £50 and £60 for the project. Finally, Christ Church, the Episcopalian congregation in Lexington, a few years later in 1808, recorded the names of twenty-two individuals who subscribed to pay an equal share of an annual two hundred dollar subscription for the establishment of pews and upkeep of their church.[10] Each of these congregations saw the need to undertake the project and considered it a chance to offer community to their congregations.

The act of building a church not only organized individuals into a congregation, but also brought people together and fostered a sense of community. Individuals became financially and physically tied to the congregation through subscriptions and parish dues. Ellen Eslinger, and others, have shown that during the earliest days of settlement, few churches were built in the backcountry.[11] This suggests that many of the early settlers felt little need or desire to formally join a congregation when they still believed they would move further inland as the territory opened up. Even once these settlers finally settled and came together in small congregations, there was little to keep them tied to the area or to one and other.

Internal disputes, disagreements over questions of theology, and the call of new land just over the horizon, were all factors in the lack of desire among many early settlers to form congregations that would bind the disparate communities together. To overcome these problems and temptations, denominations needed something to pull people together. When people were called to subscribe to the building of a church,

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[9]Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], June 6th 1789- June 1793, KHS; East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept 1842,1789- 1793, UKSC.

[10]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 25th August 1808, UKSC.

[11]

Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999) 163-164.

membership became more stable. Five congregations provide useful examples of this point: Christ Church in Lexington, Kentucky's Methodist class meetings, Bryant's Station Baptist congregation, Tate's Creek, and Boons Creek Baptist congregation.

The Episcopalians of Lexington formed themselves into a congregation in 1796 calling themselves at the time 'The Episcopal Society.' The term society was an interesting choice. Little is made of the term in either Christ Church's own accounts or indeed in other sources such as Collins's in-depth study of early Kentucky as to why it was used.[12] Two possible theories exist for the choice of the term. The first can be found in the context of the period. Kentucky's founding and settlement occurred in the years following the Revolution, a period that saw a strong backlash to anything associated or related to Britain, in particular, there was great hostility to the Anglican Church, which throughout the Revolution was suspected, with some reason, of having strong loyalist sympathies. Collins points to this period arguing that there was little doubt in the minds of many that as a result of this backlash few believed an Episcopalian/Anglican church would ever be founded in Kentucky.[13] It would seem likely that the term society might have been chosen by Kentucky's Episcopalians to underline their commitment to the new republic and to allay fears of any allegiance to Great Britain. The other theory arises from a study of the society's earliest membership lists. The society's earliest members were almost a 'who's who' of Kentucky's elite with members having familiar family names including Todd, Clay, King, and Morton. Over the next few decades, many of these families would go on to shape Kentucky's future. This would suggest that the term society was chosen as much for the group's social relationships as their religious ones. In short, the Episcopalian Society was as much a social network as a religious gathering. During the first few years of the society, it kept few minutes, but what little can be gleaned from the records and other sources demonstrates that the congregation was small, services were held mainly in individuals' homes, and the society came together only when a priest travelled through the area and could be called upon to conduct services. In short, over the first eight years of its life the Episcopal Society of Lexington functioned in a similar manner to many of the other

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[12]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm] UKCS; Elizabeth King Smith and Mary LeGrand Didlake, *Christ Church: 1796-1946 A Brief History of Its One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Service of Christ* (Lexington Ky: Whitte & Shepperson, Print., 1946) 1-6, KHS; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 437–439.

[13]Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky*, 1:437.

denominations, including the Baptists and Methodists, and barely grew.[14]

	Episcopalian Society 1808:	**Christ Church 1809:**
	Name:	**Name:**
1	Henry King	William Ridgely
2	Andrew McCall	J. W. Wyatt
3	Matthew Elder	Rob Todd
4	William Essex	Walter Warfield
5	David Sheley	William Morton
6	Rob Holmes	Alex Parker
7	Thomas Hart	Willam Macbean
8	William Macbean	P.W. Bicks
9	P.T. Roberts	John W H
10	John Bradford	John Bradford
11	William Morton	Thomas Church
12	Rob Todd	David sheley
13	Ch Wilkins	Henry Kelly
14	Fredk Rideley	William Essex
15	John W Hunt	John Posltethwait
16	Alex Parker	John Johnson
17	Walter Warfield	Henry King
18	Henry Kelly	John Hart
19	James Moore	John Jordan
20	John Posltethwait	Rev. Moore
21	Henry Clay	Henry Clay
22	Matthias Shyrock	P. Roberts
23	John Wyatt	Rob Holmes
24	Thomas Church	William McGowen
25	G.A. Weaber	Matthias Shyrock
26	Henry Purviance	-
27	John Jordan	-

Table 2: Christ Church/Episcopalian Society Membership List.

On August 25, 1808, however, the congregation saw the start of a new life with the establishment of its first vestry and a subscription raised to build a church and support the overall congregation. On that date the church minute book recorded that a subscription was created to raise two hundred dollars for the 'expense of erecting pews

[14]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm] UKSC.

in the Episcopal Church.'[15] Twenty-two slots were created with twenty-seven individuals pledging to pay an equal share. A year later, Christ Church recorded the names of both its first vestry and those who were paying pew fees. An examination of both lists shows that all of those who originally subscribed, were still paying pew rentals a year on, with every member listed on the second list, found on the original subscription list.

The congregation did not stay small for long. Over the next six years, the number of individuals paying pew rentals rose from the original twenty-two to eighty-six, increasing nearly four-fold in less than a decade.[16] The congregation also brought in more money, rising from the original budget of two hundred dollars per annum to more than seven hundred and thirty dollars annually.[17] The increase in pew rentals was closely in line with this growth, increasing over the period by more than three hundred and sixty-five percent. Such growth over such a relatively short period would seem to confirm that through the creation of a physical church building, the Episcopal Society of Lexington became more stable and grounded within the local community.

Along with the dramatic increase in the number of pew rentals over such a short period, the creation of a church also lent itself to the stability of the congregation as a whole. This can be seen in a study of those who held vestry and other church posts. Large turnover in the highest offices of the church would be evident in the names of those who were elected or appointed to the various church posts. Yet in the case of Christ Church's vestry and other committees, the names of those who held positions were remarkably stable over time. The same individuals, time and again, show up on the various lists. For example, a list from a meeting held on September 18, 1813, shows those men chosen as trustees for the church.[18] Of those nine men, four men, John Wyatt, John C Johnston, John J Wason, and William Morton were listed four years earlier on the committee of six men tasked with setting the pay of the church's sexton. The other five were found on the original list of subscribers. Indeed, over the next several years

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[15] Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], *A*ugust 25th 1808 - 26th December 1814, UKSC.

[16]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], August 25th 1808, UKSC.

[17]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 26th December 1814, UKSC.

[18]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], 18th September 1813, 1st April 1809, UKSC.

these same men showed up repeatedly as either members of the church's trustees or on the vestry. Christ Church's members might have been a who's who of Kentucky elite, but its stability and growth was attributable, in part, to the building of a physical church. This was not an aberration or anomaly, nor unique, solely to a small community, as the Episcopalians undoubtedly were.

The importance of the construction of a physical church structure can be seen by comparing the experiences of the Episcopalians with the Methodists. The Methodist denomination was, like their Episcopalian brethren, one of the first denominations to take root in early Kentucky. Methodists arrived in the territory with the first settlers in the closing years of the 1780's. The denomination's numbers, though, for much of the early period of settlement, were small, unlike in the rest of the young republic where Methodism grew rapidly throughout the period.[19] Methodist General Conference minutes show that by 1800 the denomination only had 1,741 members in Kentucky.[20] The failure of the Methodists to prosper was not because of a lack of interest from the denomination in the Trans-Appalachian West. Indeed, Francis Asbury, seeing the West as vitally important to the future growth of Methodism had travelled through the region several times by the early 1800's. The General Conference took further steps to increase the presence of Methodism in Kentucky's territory by continually creating more circuits and assigning more Circuit-Riders from other areas.[21] By 1800, the result of such work led to the creation of five separate circuits and the appointment of six ministers. Instead, the limited membership numbers can be linked to the lack of interest in the building of physical church structures. Asbury recorded in his journal from his first trip to Kentucky, that among the events that occurred throughout his trip through the territory were the usual divine services, ordinations of local deacons, and meetings with his denomination's flock. Asbury even made particular mention of the church's decision to build a school, Bethel, for those in Lexington. However, missing from Asbury's journal was any mention of passing by, through, or of the building of, the consecration of, or use of any Methodist-run churches.[22]

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[19]Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago U.P, n.d.), 49.

[20]Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky*, 1:451.

[21]Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.* (New York : Carlton & Porter, 1796).

[22] Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church:*

The lack of mention is of little surprise. Throughout much of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Methodists are known to have built but one church in the whole of Kentucky.[23] It was this lack of church building that led to the low numbers enrolled. Christ Church has shown that even with few members, building churches was possible for smaller denominations, with often the rewards outweighing the cost. Christ Church grew quickly after the construction of its church. Yet the Methodists' lack of physical churches, suggests what happened when congregations did not build them. The lack of churches quickly led to the denomination's growth stalling. Between 1787, the first mention of Methodists in Kentucky, and 1791 the denomination grew from ninety members to well over fifteen hundred; a seventeen-fold increase, in little under five years and an average increase of three-hundred members a year. Yet, the next decade saw the denomination's membership grow by only another 108 members; an average of eighteen members a year, a drastic drop off to be sure. The data demonstrates that the building of churches was an important step for denominations within Kentucky. Churches offered and provided settlers a focal point, a place to gather. They were also a physical symbol and reminder of the denomination's presence in the community and provided a locale not only for religious services but also for other church events such as Sunday schools. Those denominations that built churches saw greatly increased membership and were able to start the process of building communities.

That the lack of churches led to smaller congregation sizes and slower growth can easily be seen when congregations from the same denomination are compared and indeed when these congregations are taken from the same cluster, as with the congregations of Bryant's Station, Boone's Creek, and Tate's Creek, all three congregations of the Elkhorn Baptist Association. The Elkhorn Association was founded in the middle of 1785 taking its name from the major congregation of the area, South Elkhorn Baptist Church.[24] Among the first congregations to join the association, in September of that year, was Tate's Creek. Nearly a year later, in August of 1786, Bryant's Station joined. This brought the number of associated congregations up to

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From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815 (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 91–95; Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.*

[23]Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury,* 91-95.

[24]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 25th June 1785, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections, Louisville Kentucky.

seven.[25] Both congregations where fairly similar; each congregation held the same doctrine, both agreed to the constitution of the association, and both were junior members of the association with the South Elkhorn (128), Clear Creek (148), and Big Crossing (128) congregations having larger memberships. The two congregations were found even to be supporting 'destitute church[es]' of the association in the late 1780's.[26] In short, these two congregations where similar in many aspects, providing useful models for the benefits of building physical churches. Bryant's Station can be viewed as an example of a congregation who built early, while Tate's Creek demonstrates how those congregations that built later found both growth and stability occurred with the building of a church.

Bryant's Station was founded on 'the third Saturday of March' 1786 with the help of ministers and elders from South Elkhorn Church and Big Crossing Church.[27] The first congregation had only eight members, four women and four men. Even with so few members, the congregation did not stay idle for long, managing to obtain the services of its first minister, the Rev. Ambrose Dudley, in May of 1786 and completing construction of its first church, by February 1787, less than a year later.[28] Membership in the congregation quickly grew thereafter. Between the founding of the church in 1786 and 1792, a six-year period, the congregation grew from the original 8 members to 254. Indeed, this growth was fairly constant over the entire period adding roughly thirty members a year.

The size and growth of Bryant's Station's congregation was not the only strength it had. Bryant's Station was also fairly stable both with regards to its membership and internal discipline over both its early years, a time of struggle for many congregations, and throughout much of the period. The Elkhorn Association recorded the names of those who represented each congregation at each of the Association's meetings from its very first session in June of 1785.[30] What the Association's records show is a remarkable

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[25]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 7th August 1786, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[26]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 7th August 1786, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 421.

[27]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1786, KHS.

[28]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 3rd February 1787, 15th July 1786, KHS.

[30]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, June 1785, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special

stability within the congregation. From 1786, when Bryant's Station joined through to 1800, the Association held sixteen different sessions, of those Bryant's Station's minister Rev. Dudley is recorded as being present at all but two (October 1793 and 1795).[31] Of the other seven men sent to represent Bryant's Station and who are recorded in the Association's accounts during the same period, all but two were present at a majority of the sessions. John Mason was listed at fifteen of the sixteen meetings, William Walker at nine, and Leonard Young was present at six. This was remarkable stability in the period. This is particularly apparent when the representation of Bryant's Station is compared to other congregations within the same association, such as Boone's Creek, which over the same period had some sixteen different messengers and two years where they were unable to send anyone, or Tate's Creek which sent some seventeen ministers.[32]

Year:	Ministers/Messenger:	Congregation Size:
1788	Dudly/Walker/Mason	97
May 1789	Dudly/Roach/Mason/Young	129
October 1789	Dudly/Mason/Ellis/Young	161
1790	Dudly/Roach/Ellis/Mason	200
1791	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Monroe	233
1792	Dudly/Walker/Monroe/Mason	254
1793	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	228
October 1793	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	223
1794	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	219
1795	Walker/Mason/Young	200
1796	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Collins	194
1797	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Collins	185
1798	Dudly/Collins/Richardson/Mason	188

Table 3: Elkhorn Association Records: Bryant's Station Ministers List.[29]

Bryant's Station's stability likewise manifested itself throughout the rest of

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Collections.

[31]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, October 1793, August 1795, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[32]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, October 1793 - August 1795, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[29] Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, August 1801, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections; See Appendix: Elkhorn Association Records.

congregation's body. The church's records and Association accounts from the period of 1786 to 1800 show significant growth in the congregation's population over the period while also showing a drop in excommunications over the same period. From 1788 till 1800 Bryant's Station saw 139 adult baptisms and 168 members 'received by letter', a yearly average of 10.69 baptisms and 12.9 by letters. The church acknowledged thirty-eight excommunications for the same period, an average 2.92 excommunicated members per year, with a majority, twenty of the total thirty-eight, of these occurring between 1788 and 1792.

Bryant's Station's stability is undeniable. The congregation grew throughout much of the late eighteenth century and while it shrank from its high in 1792 it still boasted a significant population by the start of the nineteenth century. However, this drop in population was only temporary. The congregation's population would increase even more significantly over the decades of the Second Great Awakening.

Studied in isolation Bryant's Station is a useful case study in the founding, building, and growth of a typical Baptist congregation in the backcountry. The congregation demonstrates how individuals came together in a community and of the trials a typical congregation faced in a backcountry setting. The congregation was of middling size within its association being neither the largest nor the smallest congregation. Its growth was typical of many of the other congregations in the association as were its numbers in the categories of baptisms, dismissals, deaths, and excommunication and expulsions. Its church accounts can be read in the same light, detailing the month to month life of a Baptist congregation with both its highs and lows. In this Bryant's Station can be useful as a marker of growth and development for a typical Baptist congregation. Taken along with two other Baptist congregations in the same association, Tate's Creek and Boone's Creek, the full importance of the construction of church buildings can be seen.

Year:	Baptized:	Received:	Dismissed:	Excommunicated	Dead:	Total:
1788	8	14	-	-	1	97
1789	12	14	1	5	1	192
1790	12	19	-	2	-	161
August 1790	20	24	2	2	1	200
1791	21	26	5	3	4	233
1792	35	6	8	4	2	254
1793	6	9	35	4	1	228
October 1793	1	5	6	3	1	223
1794	-	6	2	1	5	219
1795	1	17	32	2	2	200
1796	-	19	20	3	4	194
1797	10	7	16	3	2	185
1798	8	14	13	2	4	188
1799	4	1	10	2	-	173
1800	1	5	12	2	-	170
Total:	139	168	162	38	28	
Per Year:	10.69	12.9	12.46	2.92	2.15	

Table 4: Bryant's Station Congregation data.[33]

Tate's Creek was formed a few years before either Bryant's Station or the Elkhorn Association.[35] The congregation was one of the founding members of the Association when it met for its second meeting in September of 1785, the meeting at which the association codified its first constitution, and can truly be called an independent association.[36] Records and accounts of the congregation's earliest days,

[33]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, October 1793 - August 1795, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[35]Tates Creek Baptist Church Records 1793 -1824, November 22nd 1793, KHS.

[36]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 30th September 1785, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

from its founding until 1793, are scarce. Tate's Creek did not begin to properly record its history with any regularity till a year later in January 1794. What can be known with any degree of certainty is that in 1788 the congregation reported to the Elkhorn Association and that it had a membership of around sixteen members. With a typical population at founding of between six and ten members, Tate's Creek's congregation, it would seem, did not grow significantly quickly in the first few years of either its life or that of the Association. Indeed, the congregation spent the first few years of its existence with a congregation smaller than all but the newly established congregations in the association. By 1790, Tate's Creek had managed to grow to 39 members. While at first glance this may seem an impressive feat, growing two and a half times in but a couple of years, the congregation was still well below the average of a 105 members per congregation in the Association that year. Indeed, of the thirteen congregations that made up the Association in 1790 only one congregation had a membership smaller than Tate's Creek, that of the congregation at Townfork.

Year:	**Baptized:**	**Received:**	**Dismissed:**	**Excommunicated**	**Dead:**	**Total:**
1788	1	-	-	-	-	16
1789	-	-	-	3	1	15
October 1789	4	4	-	-	-	27
1790	6	9	2	-	1	39
1791	28	11	9	4	1	60
1792	-	8	7	2	-	63
1793*	-	-	1	-	-	62
October 1793	-	-	-	-	-	62
1794	-	-	-	-	-	62
1795	-	-	6	-	3	46
1796	-	2	4	-	-	40
1797	-	-	-	-	-	37
1798	-	-	-	-	-	35
1799	-	-	-	-	-	30
1800	-	-	-	-	-	29
Total:	39	34	29	9	6	
Per Year:	2.052	2.615	2.23	0.6923	0.461	

First recorded mention of a physical church building.

Table 5: Elkhorn Association Records: Tates Creek.[37]

[37]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 31st May 1788, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

The congregation's growth would never rise much above an average of 4.5 members per year for much of the period, this included both baptisms and members joining through letters. In short, Tate's Creek would never fully grow to the average size for the Association. The congregation would finally see significant growth a few years later in the latter half of 1792 and into 1793 when it reported to the association that its membership numbers had risen to sixty-three. The congregation's growth, during this period, is closely related to the building of its meetinghouse. A reading of the congregation's records shows that it was during this period that the congregation had built a physical church. An entry marked as March 15, 1794 in the congregation's accounts, records that 'the church being Met at our Meeting house.'[38] Prior to this date, the church annals record church meetings occurring in various members' houses with no mention of a meetinghouse at all.

The building of a church would have taken time, yet the benefits of that investment in time and energy cannot be denied. From late 1790 through to the first mention of a meetinghouse in March of 1794, Tate's Creek saw a significant increase in the numbers of people joining the church. The year-to-year increase grew from the average of four and a half members a year to fifteen and half members per year. The congregation also experienced higher stability as found in the individuals it returned to each session of the Association. Before 1790, the Association records the names of fourteen different individuals out of the total seventeen members sent. Yet over the next decade from 1790-1800 the congregation sent only eight different individuals, a total of twenty-six members sent. This suggests a growing stability for the congregation as a whole. Before the building of a physical church the congregation was sending new members to the association on almost a meeting-to-meeting basis. Yet after the construction of the meetinghouse began, the records show the same names appearing again and again with strong continuity from meeting to meeting.

Tate's Creek would experience its largest growth in the period between the years of 1790 and 1794, immediately after the construction of the meeting house; rising to sixty-three members during this period. The congregation though would follow the rest of the Association and shrink for the rest of the decade down to thirty members in the closing years of the eighteenth century. While this could at first glance be read as a

[38]Tates Creek Baptist Church Records 1793 -1824, March 15th 1794, KHS.

failure of the concept that physical churches created community, a closer reading of the records and the data does not suggest this. Tate's Creek did lose roughly half of its congregation over this period from its high in 1794 yet when the whole of the record is examined it shows a congregation that in fact grew to twice its size from its founding to the end of the century. The congregation at Tate's Creek also experienced stability in its leadership after it built its physical meetinghouse. The decrease in membership in the closing years of the eighteenth century was experienced by many of the congregations that formed the Elkhorn Association. From minor congregations such as Tate's Creek to larger ones such as Bryant's Station, congregations shrank from their highs in the middle years of the decade. Those congregations that took the step to build physical churches, however, saw significant growth over the entire period. Bryant's Station grew from ninety-seven members to a hundred and seventy over the period, whilst Tate's Creek grew from sixteen to around thirty members in the same period. For those congregations that did not build, the story was very different. Boone's Creek provides an ideal example of the congregations that did not build physical churches.

At the time of its founding in 1785 the congregation of Boone's Creek recorded a total of fourteen members, a slightly higher than average number for a Baptist congregation at its founding.[40] The congregation would not be a founding member of the Elkhorn Association joining instead in 1786, a few years after its' founding. This was the same year Bryant's Station joined. The earliest years of the congregation saw it grow incredibly quickly. Between its founding in 1785 and its first report to the association in 1788, Boone's Creek saw its membership grow by twenty-three members to thirty-seven. Over the next four years to 1792, it would add another forty-two members raising its membership to seventy-nine. This growth would end abruptly the next year when its membership would shrink to sixty-six members, starting a decade-long recession that would find Boone's Creek at the start of the new century with only thirty-nine members. This was an increase of only two from its first mention twelve years earlier.

What few records and accounts that do exist about the congregation suggest a community that faced constant internal strife and upheaval from the very beginning and never built a church. This was clearly a congregation that 'had many dissensions' and

[40]John H. Spencer and Burrilla B. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists: From 1769 to 1885, Including More than 800 Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati : For the author, 1886), 127.

strife throughout its history.[42] Though Boone's Creek was one of the early congregations to join the Elkhorn Association in the second wave of the Association's expansion, it was a deeply troubled congregation. The Association recorded Boone's Creek as one of two congregations within the association that were considered 'destitute' requiring other congregations to provide supplies to the congregation.[43] Near the end of the century, in 1796, the congregation was again mentioned in the Association's records, this time for a complaint raised against the congregation by some of its own members. Accounts of the complaint are silent on the specific reason, though it was highly likely that the complaint was related to some particular point of theology. Whatever the reason, the conflict became so heated that the Association was called in, who in turn requested 'council from sister churches...[to] endeavour to settle those differences between' the congregation and its members.[44]

Year:	Baptized:	Received:	Dismissed:	Excommunicated	Dead:	Total:
1788	2	2	-	1	-	37
1789	-	-	4	-	-	51
October 1789	4	9	2	-	1	61
1790	4	1	4	-	-	64
1791	20	5	3	-	2	74
1792	7	2	2	-	1	79
1793	-	1	7	1	1	66
October 1793	-	-	1	-	-	66
1794	-	-	-	-	-	66
1795	-	-	-	-	-	-
1796	-	-	7	9	1	43
1797	-	3	1	2	-	48
1798	-	-	-	-	-	40
1799	1	8	-	-	-	39
1800	-	3	2	-	-	39
Total:	38	33	33	13	6	
Per Year:	2.9	2.538	2.538	1	0.4651	

Table 6: Elkhorn Association Records: Boone's Creek.[41]

[42]Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists*, 128.

[43]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 7th of August 1786, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[44]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 7th of August 1786, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

[41]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1788 – 1792, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The association's records are full of mentions of individuals and in rare cases groups of individuals within a particular congregation. For Boone's Creek though to be singularly mentioned in the association's records time and again suggests a congregation that faced considerable difficulties not just in its earliest days but also throughout its history. Boone's Creek failed where other congregations succeeded. When many of its sister congregations grew in population during the middle years of the 1790's, this was a period when Boone's Creek began to shrink. When other congregations started to find stability, it found only strife and discordance among its members.

For those congregations that could build a church it was ultimately advantageous to do so. There can be little doubt that the construction of a church was both time consuming and expensive. Church records and advertisements throughout the *Kentucky Gazette* and other papers lay testament to this. Presbyterians in Lexington spent more than a year and a half on the construction of an expansion to an already existing church building in the late 1780's.[45] Yet the benefits of building for many congregations outweighed both the cost in time or goods. Those congregations that chose to build churches found stability and growth throughout the period while those that did not often saw their populations shrink and in some cases, such as Boone's Creek, faced internal strife and discord.

More importantly, physical churches provided something very much lacking in these early days. They were very visible symbols of community, of structure, and of society. Those congregations that built churches saw their congregations grow by leaps and bounds throughout a period when the temptation of better, cheaper land lay just over the horizon would have been hard to suppress. Yet individuals and families flocked to those congregations that built churches. In doing so, religion became a very real agent of community in backcountry Kentucky. Each church became a beacon of hope, starting the process of binding individuals into small Congregational communities, tied these individuals to a particular piece of Kentucky and bound them to obligations of their chosen congregation.

The very act of building churches tied people to the community. Through the use of subscription lists the congregation offered signatories a very tangible sense of

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Special Collections.

[45]*Kentucky Gazette,* Saturday 19th January 1787, 2nd June 1788, 7th June 1788, 2, KDL.

belonging and obligation to both their fellow congregants and the wider community. Those two concepts, belonging and obligation were important to settlers and to the success of the denominations. The denominations through their establishment of local congregations offered settlers a chance to belong to one of the few institutions of community that existed in the backcountry during this period. Just as important was the idea of obligation. Obligation was an important idea to the individual of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Understanding one's obligation to one's family, to society, to one's debts was an important component in life.[46] In a backcountry environment such as Kentucky where money was often in short supply obligation would have played an important role in sustaining development. The building of a church forced these individuals to settle as they took on the burdens of obligation that came along with building a church.

Church Internal Design:

Building a church was an important part of a congregation's life. The construction of a physical church gave congregations a chance to bind together into something more than a collection of individuals who shared geographical and pastoral connections. The building of a church was but the start of the process for denominations in the creation of community. The way in which the building physically brought the congregation together was just as important. The internal design and structure of the building itself had a role in establishing connections between settlers.

The internal design varied from one denomination to the next, yet each played an important role in creating the stability and growth of those congregations. Each denomination tried to convey important messages to their congregations through the layout and design of the internal spaces of the churches. The internal design as much as the construction of the church played an important role in bringing individuals together into a community. From where the congregation sat, to where the minister stood, throughout the divine service every aspect was thought out to convey a message of commonality and community to those gathered. The internal design of Kentucky's churches called forth specific and particular messages to their congregations, whether it was an Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist congregation.

Listed in the June 7, 1788 edition of the *Kentucky Gazette* was a small

[46]Blair M Smith, *The Rise of the New Elite: The Evolution of Leadership in Kentucky c. 1770-1800*. University of Dundee 2013. 31-39.

advertisement, seeking builders for a 'framed meetinghouse' in Danville.[47] The advertisement was important in its precise description of what would be offered to the builders and in the design and layout of the new meetinghouse. The congregation was not seeking anything grand or ambitious only that it be 'fifty feet long and forty feet wide.'[48] No mention was made in the advertisement on the interior layout of the meetinghouse. It seems the congregation was, in fact, seeking a meetinghouse that was no more than four walls along with a few windows and doors.

While the advertisement does not state with any clarity for which denomination the meetinghouse was being built, the style referenced was typically common among Baptist congregations. Surviving examples of early Baptist churches such as Mount Pleasant, Marble's Creek (later known as East Hickman), and Elk Creek were no more than single rectangular room structures.[49] Drake described the Baptist church near May's Lick as 'built of logs, hewn on both sides, and had a shingled roof; one of the first I ever saw; but the finish of everything was rude, and in the winter it must have been an uncomfortable place. When the weather was warm and dry, however, the rustic edifice, in perfect keeping with the scene around, and with the dress and manners of those who assembled on the Sabbath, was attractive, and to this hour constitutes one of my cherished objects of remembrance.'[50] Drake wrote further, describing the interior of the church as 'the congregation were seated within and around the cabin-church on benches without backs.'[51] The layout of May's Lick church would have been basic to say the least with no internal permanent structures or details added. The style of structure and layout was seen as the most advantageous for the typical Baptist congregation.

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[47]*Kentucky Gazette*, Saturday June 7th 1788, KDL.

[48]*Kentucky Gazette*, Saturday June 7th 1788, KDL.

[49]See photograph opposite. Sweet confirms as much in his volume on the Baptist stating that most Baptist congregations would take more than 20 years before building a stone meetinghouse and then it would be along similar lines as the original. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists*,53–54.

[50]Daniel Drake and Charles D. (Charles Daniel) Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky : A Series of Reminiscential Letters from Daniel Drake, M.D., to His Children* (Cincinnati : Robert Clarke & Co., 1870), 190.

[51] Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky*), 190.
Drake and Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* , 193.

Image 2: Elk Creek Baptist Church, Series S-108-S23 Elk Creek (Ky), KHS.[52]

[52] Elk Creek Baptist Church, Series S-108-S23 Elk Creek (Ky), KHS.

The style was firstly economical. Many backcountry Baptist congregations were small at their founding. The typical size of a congregation founded within the Elkhorn Association for example, as has been seen, was between six and ten members at their founding. Many of these congregations took years before considering the construction of their own meetinghouse. The simple rectangular meetinghouse would have been the easiest form to build, requiring little skill to construct. The lack of any internal ornamentation, or indeed any, decoration such as stained glass windows or altars that would have graced other denominations' churches, such as the Episcopalians or Catholics, would have allowed these smaller, and in many cases also poor, congregations the ability to create their own churches and meetinghouses. The nature of the building would have resulted in fewer costs both in time and money to assemble. Such a design would have also allowed for members of the congregation to help in the construction of such a building. This design was strongly reminiscent, though slightly larger, of the family cabin where the first few years of ministry would have occurred. Indeed, its simplicity would have been an advantage for both its ease of construction and its familiarity to those in the backcountry. Its basic layout would have meant that those early settlers, who had just constructed their own family cabin, would have been familiar with its construction techniques allowing many to participate in building a meetinghouse.

The similarity to the typical family cabin would also have lent a sense of familiarity and of safety to those newly arrived. Providing a welcoming feeling and sense of normality that would have been much sought after in the alien environment for many settlers. There can be little doubt that the backcountry would have been a frightening and alien world to many. Ministers such as Asbury write in their journals, of travelling into the unknown and on constant guard for fear of native attacks.[53] How much worse these feelings would have been for those who moved permanently to the backcountry. Many, if not all, left friends and family back in the East. The dispersed nature of settlement also meant that many settlers were far from any other individuals beyond their own immediate family. A church that was reminiscent of and hearkened back to the familiar cabin they all lived in would have been welcoming. The layout would have instantly been both familiar while offering security in numbers as people

[53]Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury*.

from the surrounding area came together for worship.

As importantly, the rectangular meetinghouse conveyed other significant messages that would have helped to bind the group of individuals into community. The Spartan interior was in strong statement of a Baptist congregation's adherence to its Calvinistic theology; a theology that at its most basic called for nothing to impede an individual's direct communion with God. Indeed, the very idea of removing all possible barriers between God and the individual could be found in the basic confession of faith that guided Kentucky's Baptist communities: the Philadelphia Confession of Faith of 1742. Based on the much older London Confession of faith of 1689, these confessions set forth in a series of chapters what was expected on almost every aspect of religious life of a Baptist, from understanding Scripture to understanding justification and sanctification, and from performing acts of baptism to acts of marriage. Most conceivable questions were answered in the two confessions. The confessions, more importantly for this discussion, also covered the correct and proper way church services should be conducted. The Philadelphia Confession stated 'the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by Himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men… under any visible representations, or any other way not, prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.'[54]

Strictly understood, the Confession argued for only those aspects of worship found in Scripture itself, all else was not to be allowed. The followers of the Confession were not to engage in any form of worship that was not explicitly laid down in either Testament. These communities would have seen anything within the church not found in the Scriptures as going beyond this mandate. Indeed, the Confession stated in its opening lines, and repeated throughout the rest of the document, that nothing more than the reading of the Scriptures alone was needed and was in a very real sense the only valid or necessary form of worship.[55] This austerity brought on by the Baptist understanding of Calvinistic theology may on the surface seem counter-intuitive to the principle of community. The principles that argued that *Sola scriptura* was the only

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[54]*The Baptist Confession of Faith : First Put Forth in 1643 ; Afterwards Enlarged, Corrected and Published by an Assembly of Delegates (from the Churches in Great Britain) Met in London July 3, 1689 ; Adopted by the Association at Philadelphia September 22, 1742 ; and Now received by Churches of the Same Denomination in Most of the American Colonies ; to Which Is Added, a Short Treatise of Discipline* (Philadelphia : Printed by Ant. Armbruster, 1765), ch 22

[55]*The Baptist Confession of Faith : First Put Forth in 1643 …*, ch 1.

vehicle both needed and necessary for salvation and that any form of ritual not stated in Scriptures was anathema, in many ways created a very individualistic religion. The solution though can be found in its austerity. The very items that would on the surface appear to work against community, in fact played an important role within Kentucky's existing environment, in creating a group of individuals into a community.

The Spartan layout of the structure if understood solely in the terms of church, as used by other denominations, could not have created community within a Baptist congregation. Baptist theology was at a very basic level an individualistic faith. The Confession of Faith adopted by most of Kentucky's Baptist communities only seems to heighten and focus the individualism of the theology more so. The stark and unadorned layout and structure of the Baptist meetinghouse meant there were few opportunities to hide among other congregants. There was little in the building to focus on other than the other worshippers.

The language used by the Baptists themselves to refer to their own churches offers another suggestion, that of the meetinghouse. The meetinghouse was the term used throughout Baptist writings for their churches. The word was used within Kentucky specifically by the Baptists and explained much about both the layout and how it was used to inspire the development of a community with the congregation. Baptist congregations did not build churches as understood by other denominations. They built what they referred to throughout their church minutes, personal correspondence, and association minutes, as meetinghouses. Evidence from sources such as these, suggest that the Baptist meetinghouse acted as a gathering place, place of worship, a meeting hall for church sessions, and many other uses. Meetinghouses filled a crucial role within a Baptist congregation's life. William Hickman, one of Kentucky's more prolific Baptist ministers, distinguished between church and meetinghouse, referring to the collective congregation as a church, and the physical building as a meetinghouse. Hickman related one particular story within his writings that illustrates the distinction. He wrote of his participation with a 'church called Tomahawk.'[56] In his discussion of the Tomahawk church he recalled 'I lived about three miles from them and often had meetings between our church and that.'[57] Further on, Hickman relates the

[56]William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life and Travels. For more than Fifty Years; a Professed Servant of Jesus Christ,* KHS.

[57]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life*.

story of a Mr. Flournoy.[58] Within the story Hickman uses the term church once and society twice, both in reference to the community of Tomahawk at large ('whilst attending this church, there lived near a neighbor that was thought to be a Christian, but had not joined society'[59]) but used the terms meetinghouse or meeting some nine times in connection to the building, for example, writing 'the same week there was a meeting at the meetinghouse for a strange minister,' or 'the next morning he (Mr. Flournoy) came to my meetinghouse.'[60] Indeed, the only times Hickman made mention of churches within his writings was in connection with or to a specific congregation.[61]

Nor was Hickman alone in making this distinction. Both associations and individual congregations drew distinctions between the term church and meetinghouse, using the first solely in connection with the congregation as a whole and the second when writing of the building. Congregations such as Forks of Elkhorn or Boone's Creek used the term church throughout their minutes only in connection to the congregation at large. Starting many of their entries with 'the Church met at', 'the Church conveyned [sic], or, the Church agreed to.'[62] In every case the use of church by these congregations can be understood only in its use as the whole congregation. The term church was not used in connection with the physical building at any time. On the rare occasion that the minutes record discussion of the building itself, typically when beginning construction or repairs, the term meetinghouse was employed. This distinction was and is important, both to Baptists and to our understanding of their physical churches. The term meetinghouse allowed Baptists to use their buildings in a variety of ways, ways that may not have been available to other denominations and explains much about why their interiors where Spartan.

Their Spartan layout, whilst strongly following Baptist interpretation of Calvinistic theology, helped to facilitate the use of Baptist meetinghouses in these other ways. Specifically, Baptist meetinghouses seem to have been used as meeting places for more secular events as well as places for divine services. For instance, individual

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[58]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life.*

[59]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life.*

[60]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life.*

[61]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life.*

[62]Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, 2nd Saturday of January 1800, 2nd Saturday of June 1801, KHS, Minutes of Boone's Creek Baptist Church, 26th January 1799, KHS.

congregation minutes demonstrate that it was in the meetinghouse that the congregation's monthly meetings were held. Many of the various congregations of the Elkhorn Association started their monthly meetings with these words 'the Church met and after Divine worship proceeded to Business.'[63] The minutes that followed typically describe the month-to-month running of a congregation and the various problems and issues faced by individuals within the congregation. Indeed, the laws of the congregations stated that it was within the context of church meetings held in the meetinghouse that cases such as these were to be dealt with. The meetinghouse acted as much as a place of worship, as it did as a meetinghouse in the truest sense of the word. These minutes made particular mention when meetings did not occur within the meetinghouse, setting down within their minutes where the meeting took place and occasionaly why it was not held at the meetinghouse in the first place. A Bryant's Station's entry for August 1787, for example, recorded 'At a Church meeting held at Brother Ambrose Dudley's' house broke a pattern going back to its founding in April of 1786.[64] While the Forks of Elkhorn congregation followed a similar pattern, recording in January 1800 'The Church met at Mr Browns.'[65] The entry is cut off at this point; the book itself was trimmed and rebound in later decades, losing the explanation of why the congregation felt a need to meet at Mr. Browns' house. What is important to note from these two congregations was that each felt a need to record when they did not meet at their normal meetinghouses. Typically their entry only stated that a meeting took place after divine worship at their respective meetinghouses. To break with their traditional format and to specifically clarify that a meeting took place outside the meetinghouse suggests that for Baptists where the meeting took place was important. The meetinghouse was a place where the entire congregation gathered in community. Extraordinary meetings occurring outside those walls might suggest that not all the congregation was either present or that they wanted to explicitly set out in their records when such meetings occurred in order to point out the extraordinary circumstances around such meetings.

Neither was the meetinghouse used solely by the congregation. The Association to which the individual congregation belonged also used the same meetinghouses for

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[63]Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, 2nd of April 1800, KHS.

[64]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, 16th August 1787, KHS.

[65]Minutes of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church 1788-1903, 2nd of April 1800, KHS.

much the same reason, for its own meetings, typically moving from one congregation to the next after every meeting. Minutes from the Elkhorn Association began all their entries with a recording of when the meeting was held and at which meetinghouse. Such as the first few entries of the Association in 1785 stating that the first one was held at South Elkhorn in June 1785, a few months later in September at Clear Creek, and in October 1785 setting forth where the next several meetings would be held. In this case, 'Big Crossing the February before the first Sabbath,' in April at Tate's Creek, again 'before the first Sabbath', Limestone in July, and finally at South Elkhorn in September.[66]

The Association to which the individual congregation belonged utilized meetinghouses for similar purposes. Holding meetings in the various meetinghouses suggests that the physical building was used for much more than just divine service. These buildings for the Baptists acted as places to gather, a place to be in a world where, as Elsinger and others have argued, there were few places to come together. The Spartan layout of Baptist churches facilitated this by being so open. Fewer unmovable objects such as pews, altars, or tabernacles allowed the interiors to be reconfigured at will. This though was not the only layout used by denominations within Kentucky, nor the only interpretation of Calvinistic Theology. Other denominations, such as the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, found other ways to create community through their own understanding of theology and church layout.

Presbyterian Church:

The Spartan layout used by the Baptists was not the only acceptable format for the other denominations that followed the theology of John Calvin. The Presbyterians of Kentucky were strong contenders to be heirs to John Calvin's theology. Both found alternate interpretations of Calvin and manifested these interpretations in the layouts of their churches. Kentucky's Presbyterians found their roots and heritage within the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia, who in turn had its roots and authority from the much older Synod of Philadelphia. It was this Synod, the Synod of Philadelphia, which in the early eighteenth century (1729) adopted the Westminster Confession requiring all clergy to accept the confession before ordination, the confession all of Kentucky's ministers prior to the Cumberland schism were required to take before ordination.

[66]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1st October 1785, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections

There were few immediate differences between the Westminster Confession adopted and used by the Presbyterians and that of the Philadelphia Confession of Kentucky's early Baptists. The Philadelphia Confession was based on the Westminster Confession with but a few differences found in word choice and emphasis throughout the some thirty plus chapters. A reading of both confessions shows that, at least with the chapter dedicated to worship, the wording is identical. It seems that the Baptist communities on both sides of the Atlantic adopted the wording of the Westminster Confession word for word in the construction of their respective confessions. The distinction and interpretation though between Baptist and Presbyterian theologians and by extension their understanding of churches, their construction, and use can be seen in the footnotes found in both confessions.[67]

The second article of the chapter on worship, in particular, from both confessions, provides a useful demonstration of how the two denominations understood their theology as a whole. The article of the Westminster Confession stated that 'Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and to him alone: not to angels, saints, or any other creature; and, since the fall, not without a Mediator: nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.'[68] The Baptist Philadelphia confession used very similar terminology stating that 'Worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to Him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creatures. And since the Fall, worship is not to be given without a mediator, nor by any other mediation than that of Christ.'[69] In both confessions, the wording is much the same with only a handful of differences. Specifically, the final line with the Baptist confession added the words 'to be given' to the line on the use of a mediator. The difference is found in the footnotes attached to the confessions. The Baptists added a few lines pointing to particular passages in both the Old and New Testaments. This made it clear to the reader that much of what was written in the confession as a whole was up to the reader to understand in his or her own way. Indeed, this was a prime example of Baptist theology at work. It was not the place of any other to explain the faith to the follower. It was through the personal relationship the follower had with

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[67]John Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith : With Introduction and Notes* (Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1881), 126.

[68]Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* , 126.

[69] *The Baptist Confession of Faith*, 49.

Christ that he or she would understand the confession in their own way. Nothing, not even the confession could stand between that relationship or shape that relationship beyond the most basic guidance of a few pointed references to the Bible itself.[70]

The Presbyterians though took another approach, attaching explanations and particular interpretations to each article within the confession. Within the second article, in particular, the Presbyterians set forth a detailed explanation of both how the article should be understood and also how other denominations and faiths could be understood as breaking from it. For example stating 'Romanists [Roman Catholics] worship God by images, and so break the second commandment.'[71] Or, later on giving example that 'Socinians (a follower of the Polish reformer Fausto Sozzini) give not worship to the Son as to the Father, and acknowledge not the personality of the Spirit, and thus not worshipping the one God in three persons.'[72] In both cases, the Presbyterians show both, how the article was to be understood and how others fell foul of this understanding.

These commentaries and explanations played an important role in how Presbyterians understood their church buildings. The explanations and guidance found within these footnotes led the Presbyterians to develop their theology along very different lines to that of the Baptists. Presbyterians argued that religion on the one hand must be deeply personal and relied much on a personal relationship with God, yet it was also very communal in particular noting within the sixth article of the chapter that 'each form of worship [personal and communal] has a solemnity and significance of its own. The observance of the one will not excuse the neglect of the other.'[73] It was this understanding that saw the Presbyterians in Kentucky and elsewhere build remarkably different churches from those of the Baptists. Their different church structure also played a very crucial role in binding and building Kentucky's early society.

Readers of the small advertisement within January 19, 1787 edition of the *Kentucky Gazette,* would not have been surprised to find a notice placed by the Presbyterian community in Lexington.[74] For Lexington's Presbyterians to have built a

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[70]Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 94, 130–134.

[71]Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 126.

[72]Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 126.

[73]Macpherson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 129.

[74]*Kentucky Gazette,* 19th January, 1787, KDL.

meetinghouse by the late 1780s, let alone contemplate expanding the current building, was a remarkable feat. Few other denominations, let alone other congregations, had yet to begin building even their first buildings. Little detail remains of this meetinghouse save that it was built approximately three years before the 1787 notice for expansion, in 1784, and was not much more than, in the words of one historian, 'a log house of worship.'[75] The congregation though would go on in 1807 to build a much larger meetinghouse on the spot of the existing one. Accounts of this enterprise along with blueprints and descriptions of its interior survive to this day.[76]

The congregation's first meetinghouse may not have been much more than a 'log house of worship' sharing much with their Baptist counterparts in the newly founded territory. The similarity though would stop both at the proverbial and actual door of the building. The plans show an interior that followed the Presbyterian understanding of Calvinistic theology. Personal prayer and reading of the Bible were important, but so too was communal worship. The church manifested this in two important ways, the building and placement of pews and the pulpit.

The Presbyterians built unmovable pews within their churches. The use of unmovable pews was significant resulting in a building that was very much designed for one purpose alone, religious services. These pews were placed not just in forward facing rows but also in a horseshoe with pews on either side of the main desk and pulpit. The placement was ideal for creating both community and hierarchy on several levels. The physical pew, not much more than a bench, forced individuals, families, and neighbours to sit side-by-side and cheek-to-cheek with one another. There could be no sense of individuality or privacy in such an arrangement. The wide-open expanse that these settlers had found in the newly settled territory was confined to the outside. On the other hand, the close nature of the pews forced the congregation to be physically close to one another, to be physically in the presence of others. It was a community through proximity in a very real way.[77]

Just as important the placement of the pews into a horseshoe model allowed the

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[75]Paul Keith Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

[76]Presbyterian church records (Lexington KY) 1807-1976, August 1807, UKSC.

[77]Clay Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture of Kentucky* (Lexington, Ky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 20–29; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 58–65.

congregation to see who was present and who was not in a way that normal pews, in forward-facing rows, could never achieve. The congregation in their choice of layout fostered a sense of community through physically being present at worship. It would be obvious to others in the congregation when one of the members was missing or appeared late. This alone would have been an important step towards fostering community but the congregation in their design also importantly placed the doors to the church not at the back but halfway up on either side of the building. Through this model, being present for worship became important. One could not just slip in late to the service and be unnoticed. The placement of the pews and the doors meant that the congregation as a whole could see and be seen.

The community was created through the use of the physical pew. It forced individuals to sit side by side with no personal space or sense of privacy. The placement of the pews within the building also allowed all to be seen. In both cases the pew created community through physically forcing the congregation to be a community. If the pews did not bring the sense of community spiritually, at least it did through physical proximity. This though was not the only tool used by the congregation. The placement and use of the pulpit also had a vital role.

The pulpit within Presbyterian churches, like that built by the congregation of Lexington, was placed with care. Typically placed at the centre of the building where all could see. In the case of Lexington's Presbyterian Church they took this idea one step further placing the pulpit, from which the Gospel would be read and also the sermons preached, not just in the centre, but also raised so those on both levels could see and be seen. This placement gave the congregation a chance to see the minister and, as importantly, for the minister to see his congregation.

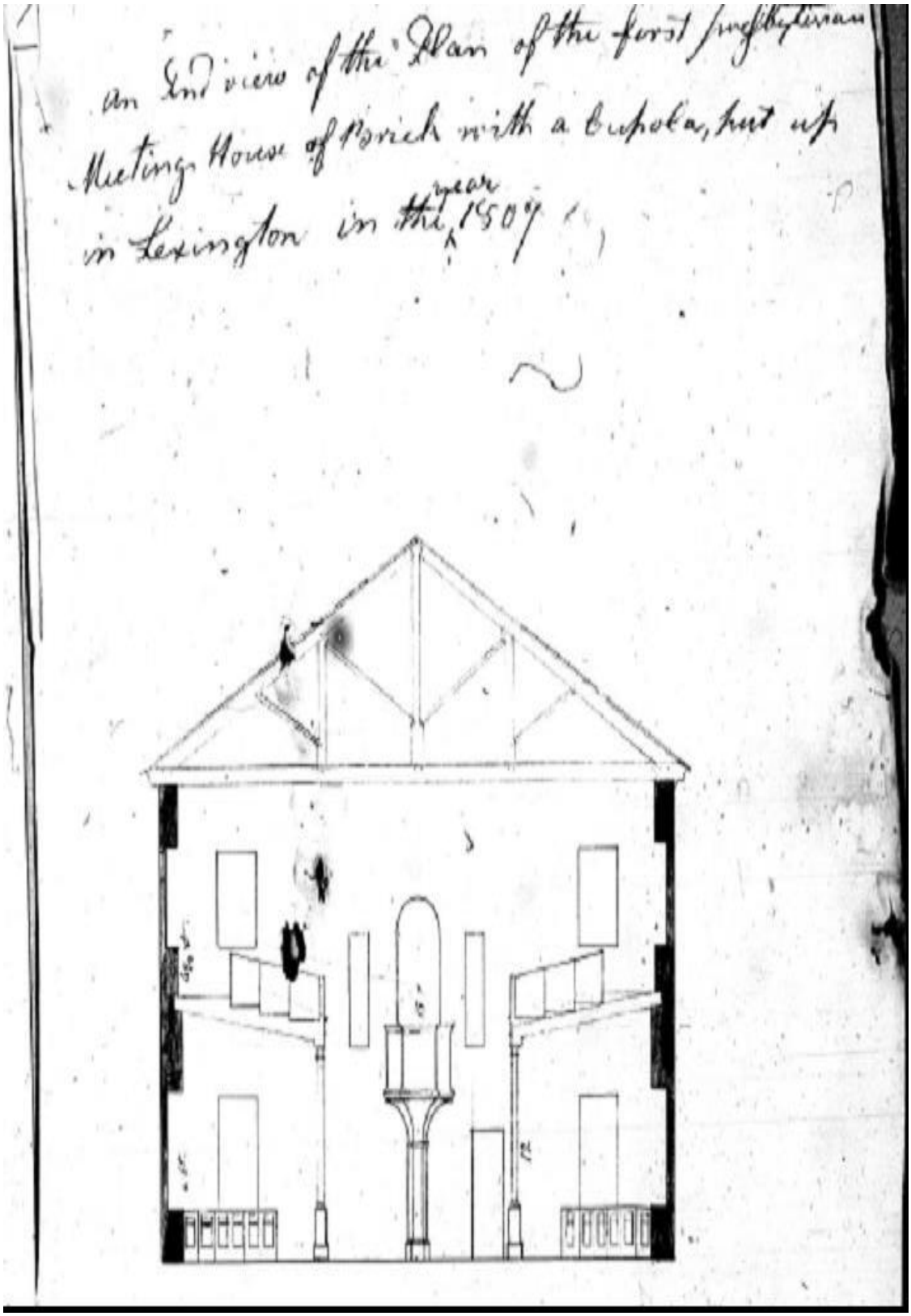

Image 3: First Presbyterian church of Lexington.[78]

[78]First Presbyterian Church records (Lexington KY) 1807-1976, UKSC.

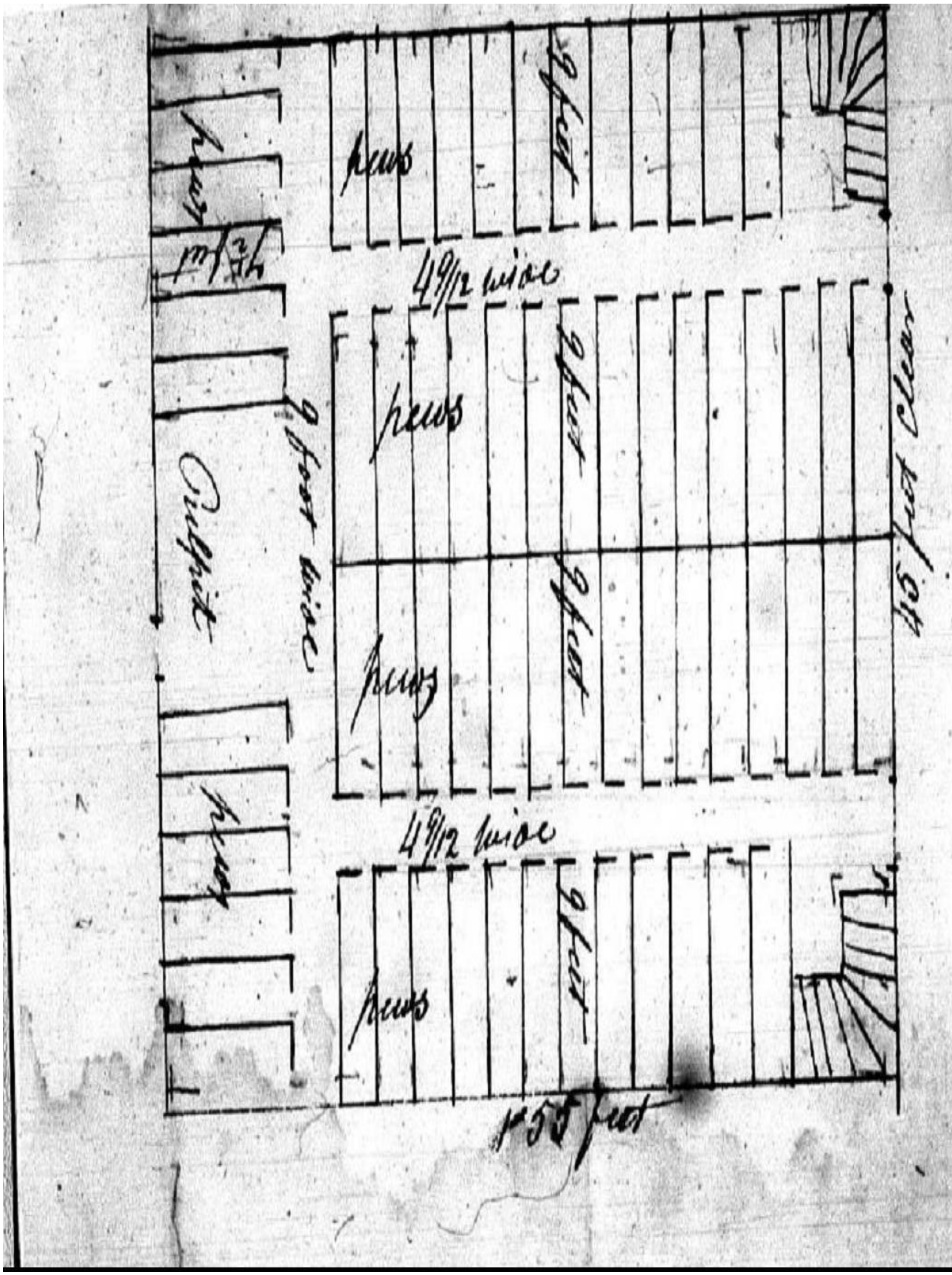

Image 4: First Presbyterian church of Lexington.[79]

[79]First Presbyterian church records (Lexington KY) 1807-1976, UKSC.

The role of the minister was, as previous chapters have shown, important in early Kentucky. It was the minister more often than not that connected his far-flung congregation with one another and with the world at large, carrying news and letters as he moved about the countryside. David Rice records spending much of his first year moving about Kentucky in order to become 'better acquainted' with his flock.[80] This practice was common in the backcountry as other ministers and priests from Methodists to Catholics all followed the same pattern. Personal letters from settlers also show that this was a two-way avenue appreciating the personal calls ministers made on local families, even those that rarely, if ever, made it to service.[81] Placing its pulpit in such a place, the congregation of Lexington was setting forth an important message to its community. Religious services were about much more than saving one's soul or even saving the souls of one's family; they were also about creating community. The minister, the one individual within the congregation, who interacted with everyone and the one individual who moved about freely among the countryside, was able to see who was and was not present. The pulpit's placement highlighted for the whole congregation that the minister was the epicentre of community. By visibly showing him at the centre, this idea was reinforced again and again at every service. He, through his ministry, was able to pull individuals into a community. The placement of the pulpit showed this to be true, both symbolically and in reality.

Conclusion:

Presbyterian congregations, such as that of the one at Lexington, manifested their understanding of Calvinistic theology in their buildings much like the Baptists. They expertly used their buildings to convey important messages to their congregations and the greater community. They were not alone. Every congregation and denomination that built physical churches in Kentucky did so to forge a sense of community among their congregations. These congregations went to extraordinary lengths in the construction of their churches. From the very act of building a physical church to the layout within the building, these communities were actively engaged in constructing and creating a society in the backcountry. Churches were expensive undertakings in

[80]Bishop and Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years*, 68.

[81]Ibby Tegarden letter to Reuben Faulkner, 19th July 1846, Watson and Robinson Family Letters: Box 1, KHS.

time, money, and resources for many congregations, in some cases, taking years to build. Their construction consumed many of the limited resources of these congregations, both in the materials needed and the cash or goods to pay the workers who built the church. These problems were compounded by the fact that many of these congregations were often small and poor to begin with. However, construction of a church paid dividends down the road. Those congregations that did undertake such enterprises typically found stability and steady growth throughout the period. This growth was due in part to both the construction of a physical church and its layout. It was also cross denominational as those congregations that built and used their churches to create a community grew as their fellow co-religious who did not would ultimately falter. It seems it did not matter if the congregation in question was Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, those who built grew; those who did not found their growth stalled.

The building of a physical church was an important tool in the denominations' inventory, but it was only one part of the systems denominations used to forge communities in the backcountry. Camp meetings, congregations, and the offer of alternative ecclesiastical institutions, were also part of that system. Each of these taken together formed part of the work of the denominations to bring order to the backcountry. The next chapter examines how congregations and denominations began the process of ordering and organizing backcountry society.

The next chapter will start by examining institutions at the regional level such as denominational societies and associations and their influence on the formation of order among settlers. The chapter will move progressively downwards focusing specifically on concepts of parishes and finally ending on a discussion of the congregation as a basic unit of governance within Kentucky. This chapter will also examine the reason the denominations undertook such a monumental task, as well as, what the individual gained from being a member of such volunteer organizations. How doing so created links between different and usually dispersed churches pulling each into a larger community. Finally, it will examine how the hierarchical structures of each denomination pulled individual churches and parishes into wider communities at every level and how in doing so, religion through the denominations, not only created society and community within Kentucky but also tied the young state into the wider nation. In short, it will study how the hierarchical structures of the denominations turned these western farmsteads and settlements into a community.

Chapter Five

Ordering The Backcountry:

The denominations' creation of physical churches, the establishment of important institutions such as schools and associations, as well as the development and use of camp meetings, were all pointed towards one goal for the denominations, the growth of membership; while for settlers that goal was community and a sense of belonging. They were effective tools for growing membership. Membership of Kentucky's denominations grew from a handful at Rev. John Lythe's first service in 1775, to 6,605 members in 1790, to over 32,000 members a decade later.[1] Much of this growth was related to the denominations' efforts to organize and order Kentucky's religious environment.

This growth was related to the organizing process in which each denomination engaged. Camp meetings were the beginning of the process. They were a way for the denominations to reach those individuals who would not have otherwise crossed over the threshold of a local congregation and into the church. Camp meetings engaged these individuals within their own local environment. That process was continued at the local congregational level. At camp meetings settlers found an institution that was local, and offered stability, along with the sense of belonging that was lacking for many. These institutions were underpinned by the establishment and construction of physical churches and meetinghouses. Churches were physical symbols that helped tie settlers to the land whilst providing focal points for community. Each action taken by the denominations, from the establishment of camp meetings with their more inclusive forms of worship, to the creation of physical churches and meetinghouses were a step

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1 Rev.W.E. Arnold, *A History of Methodism in Kentucky. Vol I From 1783-1820.* (Herald Press, 1935) 1; Richard Henderson, '*Journal of Trip to Boonesborough,'* Draper Manuscript Collection DM1CC21-105; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 416–490; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 21–54; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American : The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 18–36; William Warren Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials* (Cooper Square Publishers, 1946), 20–54; Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 429–430; Walter B. Posey, 'The Advance of Methodism into the Lower Southwest', *The Journal of Southern History* 2, no. 4 (1 November 1936): 439–52; Walter B. Posey, 'The Baptists and Slavery in the Lower Mississippi Valley', *The Journal of Negro History* 41, no. 2 (1 April 1956): 117–30; Otto Arthur Rothert, *A History of Unity Baptist Church, Muhlenberg County, Kentucky* (Louisville, KY : J. P. Morton, 1914).

towards the organization of Kentucky's backcountry.

Kentucky's denominations from the very beginning understood that in order to grow properly within Kentucky, and in particular within its backcountry environment, a form of order and stability was needed and in some instances this could mean a minister being given responsibility for several separate congregations. The Rev. David Rice, for example, highlighted the difficulty that the denominations faced, noting during his second year in Kentucky, how '[w]ith a good deal of difficulty… a congregation was organized in what is now called Mercer county, with as much formality as their distance from other regular churches, and other disadvantages would admit.'[2] The records of the Transylvania Presbytery add that soon after the congregations of 'New Providence, Harbinson's & Whitley's' were added to his care as well.[3] Rice was not alone in taking on the responsibility of multiple congregations. Minutes from the Transylvania Presbytery records suggest that during the denomination's early years in Kentucky it was often common for ministers to cover multiple congregations. The Rev. McClure was given Hanging Fork, Paint Lick, Ewings, and Stoner; the Rev. Crawford was given Paint Lick, Kingston, and the North Fork of Elkhorn; the Rev. Rankin supplied the congregations of Glen's Creek and Licking; finally the Rev. Tamplin had all the vacant congregations in 'Jefferson & Nelson Counties' under his charge.[4] Though never explicitly stated, the Transylvania Presbytery was following an old and trusted tradition known as the parish. In modern context the parish has often come to represent an individual congregation and its associated church. One's local congregation, the church, and the parish become interchangeable words that represent one 'thing', the religious community the individual belongs to. The parish though was much more than one's local congregation. It was geographical in scope and often encompassed multiple places of worship (churches) and religious communities. By assigning groups of congregations to specific ministers, the Transylvania Presbytery was establishing 'parishes' within Kentucky.

The parish model that Kentucky's Presbyterians were developing in these early

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[2]Robert Hamilton Bishop and David Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men Who Were Eminent and Useful in Their Day* (T. T. Skillman, 1824), 69.

[3]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], May 1786, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

[4]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], May 1786, UKSC.

years had its roots strongly tied to pre-Reformation Christianity, as well as the structure that had been in place in Virginia, England, the Church of England, and elsewhere for over a century or more. Within Virginia, the parish was at once a basic unit of territory and of governance. Virginia law, as early as the 1640's, provided for the creation and establishment of parishes within the bounds of the colony.[5] Parishes were supposed to be centrally located but were often large, with, as Rhys Isaac has pointed out, many of the western counties being one and the same with the parish.[6] The few recorded adjustments that the Virginia assembly made over the next century and half, provide testament to a system that worked. This was a system with which Rice, McGready, Rankin, and other ministers who had their starts in Virginia, would have been familiar.[7] That organization of the several congregations under the offices of one minister by the Transylvania presbytery in the 1780's was in all but name the parish model.

The Presbyterians were not alone in the use of the concept of the parish model in Kentucky. From the start, the Methodist denomination established its first long ranging circuits in Kentucky in 1782. Known as the District of Kentucky, this first circuit encompassed the entire territory and parts of the Ohio country as well, and consisted of various class meetings that were established by circuit riding ministers.[8] Within a decade, the Methodists would create two more circuits out of the larger District of Kentucky, and assign groups of ministers to the newly created circuits. Though far from identical to the pattern of parishes established by Virginia, or the clustering of congregations by Kentucky's Presbyterians, the Methodist circuit model was analogous. Each of the denominations in question created a structure where individual congregations, or in the case of the Methodist individual classes, were part of a larger

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[5]John K Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 17.

[6]Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 58.

[7]Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 60-72; James McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready, Late Minister of the Gospel in Henderson, Ky. ...* (Nashville, Tenn. : Printed and Published at J. Smith's Steam Press, 1837); Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* , 429–430; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians,* 21–53; Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Fronier* (Chicago U.P, n.d.), 21–33; Christopher Waldrep, 'The Making of a Border State Society: James McGready, the Great Revival, and the Prosecution of Profanity in Kentucky', *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 3 (1 June 1994): 767–84.

[8]A. H. (Albert Henry) Redford, *The History of Methodism in Kentucky* (Nashville, Tenn., Southern Methodist Pub. House, 1868), 21.

whole. Even the Baptist denomination saw the usefulness of this model. This broke deeply held theological beliefs that placed individual interpretation of scripture at the heart of its faith, and the supremacy of the congregation above all but the individual. Baptists in turn created associations that linked the various congregations together into a loose but wide-ranging, in a territorial sense, federation. In short, this structure was a territory-wide network of individuals, congregations, and ministers that had some common ground in an era when many settlers were no more than strangers to one and other.

The parish model as an organizational principle was important for the growth of the denominations and for the settlement of Kentucky as a whole. For the denominations, these parishes were a way to organize the backcountry, to bring some form of stability, albeit in their case specifically for religious, ministerial, and membership reasons. For example, the prevalence of congregations was so common that by 1793 the Transylvania Presbytery had placed a moratorium on establishing any new congregation within ten miles of an existing one.[9] By legislating where new churches could and could not be built, Kentucky's Presbyterians were actively organizing their faithful. Nor were they alone in this practice. During their yearly General Conferences, the Methodist denomination commonly, and regularly, examined previously established local yearly conferences and circuits, breaking larger ones up and as numbers grew, establishing smaller ones in their places. The General Conference of 1796, for example, saw the Methodists establish a yearly Western Conference to oversee Kentucky and much of Tennessee.[10] Up to this point, much of the burden of organizing the Kentucky territory had fallen under the purview of the General Conference. With the creation of the yearly Western Conference, these functions of organizing Kentucky's circuits, overseeing the assignment of ministers, and the building of houses of worship, fell to those who were active in the area and knew the landscape.[11] In short, this allowed those ministers who knew Kentucky intimately the powers they properly needed to organize and order Kentucky's religious populations.

Such actions by Kentucky's Presbyterian presbyteries, the Methodists' yearly

[9]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 1793, UKSC.

[10]Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1796), 11-12.

[11]Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836,* 12.

conferences, and others, importantly intoned that the individual congregation was but a single unit of a larger enterprise and that the individual was part of a much broader community than their single congregation. The congregation became much more than solely a singular house of worship. Instead, it became a de facto center of governance both for the denominations and for the individuals who belonged to them. This chapter will examine how and why denominations began to order and organize Kentucky. It will examine ideas such as the role of the congregation as a basic unit of governance within Kentucky, and the use of ecclesiastical courts over civil courts. It will also examine the reason the denominations undertook such a monumental task, as well as, what the individual gained from being a member of such volunteer organizations.

Congregations As A Basic Unit of Governance:

John Nelson has argued that for many historians, and for most general histories, the prevailing interpretation has been to see the county and township as the most basic unit of local government in early America.[12] Nelson argues, however, that within Virginia this is inaccurate. Instead, he places the parish along with the county as the most basic unit of government for the colony.[13] For example, he emphasizes that the church and colonial government worked hand in hand on many projects such as road-building, with civil authorities assigning surveyors while the parish vestry was obligated to provided the labour. He also notes the overlapping jurisdictions of civil and ecclesiastical courts.[14] Indeed, vestrymen brought cases to the county court in Virginia in much the same manner that the Grand Jury did. His argument is a valid one and has strong importance to Kentucky as well.

In 1776, the county of Kentucky was created out of the Virginia county of Fincastle.[15] Until 1792, when Kentucky formally became an independent state, it was the government in Richmond that governed the territory. Many of Kentucky's most prominent families, along with many of Kentucky's first ministers, traced their heritage back to Virginia. Ministers who were either, born, raised, trained, or educated within the state, would have necessarily been shaped by this relationship between church and state.

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[12]Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes*, 13.

[13]Nelson, *A Blessed Company Parishes*, 13–16.

[14]Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 14.

[15]Hening's *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 257-261.

Being the first state established after the official separation of church and state, Kentucky's 1792 and 1799 constitutions might have been a shining example of the ideals of the separation of church and state advocated by some of the founding fathers, yet the reality in the backcountry was very different from this ideal. With few existing civil institutions, it was the various denominations through their congregations that became, for many settlers, the most basic unit of local civil, as well as religious governance; the church was the one institution that was omnipresent throughout their lives. The local congregation was the one institution that both shaped how settlers saw their world and how they interacted with it. It was the one institution that was, in the words of Nelson, 'closest to human need and the best equipped to respond' to it.[16]

Before 1792, Virginia legislation within Kentucky resulted in little more than the creation of counties, the establishment of a handful of county courts, and the appointments of justices of the peace, militia companies, and sheriffs.[17] In each case, the institutions that were established typically had little direct impact on the lives of ordinary settlers. The county courts, for example, met only once every three months, as per legislation, at a county seat that was often distant from the homes of many of those living in the backcountry. The local congregation, on the other hand, was a local institution and gathered regularly, in many cases weekly whether or not there was a settled minister available. Each denomination made an effort to hold services regularly. One of the Transylvania Presbytery's first actions was, for example, to accept and pass the Synod's recommendation that 'all the vacant congregations under their care to meet together every Lord's Day at one or more places for the purpose of prayer & praise & the reading of Holy Scriptures.'[18] The same session saw the presbytery establish a rota for ministers to cover vacant congregations and the appointment of deacons to support the congregations when a minister was not available.[19] Methodists and Baptists were able to move around this problem by virtue of their organization. Methodists called for the establishment of small local class meetings that would meet regularly, coming together as a whole only if and when a circuit rider was in the area. Baptists at their

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[16]Nelson, *A Blessed Company* , 14.

[17]Hening's *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia,* Vol. IX, 1821, 257-261.

[18]Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC; Sweet, *Religion on the American (Vol. II) The Presbyterians*, 131.

[19]Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 17th 1786, UKSC.

monthly meetings chose their ministers, elders, and deacons from amongst their own congregation resulting in few vacant congregations. Those that were vacant typically had a new minister within a month of a vacancy occurring.[20]

The local congregation was not just immediately present in the lives of settlers through the holding of regular, weekly, services either. The congregation was also geographically much closer to settlers than most countywide institutions. Kentucky's first three counties (Fayette, Jefferson, and Lincoln) were all hundreds of square miles in size even as late as 1800. Fayette County, for example, was by 1799, 285 square miles in size, covering 25 miles in width by 11 miles in length.[21] Yet within this county there were dozens of congregations, with the city of Lexington alone having at least five separate congregations. These congregations included Christ Church, Episcopalian established around 1784, one Methodist society established around 1789, two Presbyterian congregations established in 1784 and 1785, and at least one active Baptist congregation during the period.[22] As early as 1786 the Elkhorn Association, only one of three associations in Kentucky during this period, had seven congregations in communion. The number grew to fourteen by 1790 and to twenty-six by 1800. The data suggests that congregations were so common that the Presbyterians worried about their ability to staff so many and they tried to control their growth.

Finally, while most settlers had little active participation in the county court, from the beginning they actively participated in the establishment and government of their congregations. Kentucky's congregations often instituted what were referred to as 'Rules for the Government of the Church' or 'Rules of Discipline.'[23] The creation and establishment of these rules was one of the first acts of the democracy that the congregation engaged in. Bryant's Station, for example, recorded that it was only 'after

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[20]Methodist Episcopal Church. General Conference, *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Volume I. 1796-1836.* (New York : Carlton & Porter, 1796); Sweet, *The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials,* 45.

[21]Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky: History of Kentucky*, vol. 2 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 169.

[22]*Kentucky Gazette*, January 21st 1792, KDL. Within this edition can be found a reference to a County court order requiring the posting of a court summons on the door of the Baptist meeting house in Lexington.

[23]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS; Mt. Pleasant Church Records, 1790-1828, September 25th 1790, KHS. These two congregations provided useful examples of rules of government or discipline at the founding of a Baptist congregation.

Consultation with ourselves' that the 'rules of government' were accepted.[24] Similarly, John Taylor recalled the formation of Clear Creek in April of 1785 as being derived from 'a council on the subject of a constitution.'[25] These rules were, in the case of many Baptist congregations, placed in the opening pages of the congregation's record book, and typically directly after the accepted confession of faith to which the individual congregation subscribed. Their placement was no accident either, as linking such rules with the theology of the congregation implied to all that they were a direct extension of a higher power. Many of these rules, as their title implies, were written for the governance of congregational business, setting out how and when the congregation should meet along with what business fell within its jurisdiction. Among the rules found in Bryant's Station's records, for example, was one that stated 'not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together, but constantly attending our appointed meetings as far as the Lord shale enable us.'[26] Mount Pleasant's rules contained detailed descriptions of when the congregation would meet, 'eleven oclock [on]...the first Saturday of each month' and when communion would be offered, 'twice a year to wit May or June and September or October.'[27] Other rules that were laid down by the various congregations covered a broad set of categories from the maintenance of the physical church buildings to behaviour within meetings. Yet, often these congregations set out rules that went beyond the governance of congregation to include regulations that were designed to govern the daily interactions and lives of the laity. Both Bryant's Station and Mount Pleasant instituted rules that directly impacted the daily lives of settlers. In one example, Mount Pleasant stated that 'all private transgressions, especially a trespass against an individual undoubtable [sic] does come under the notice of and ought to be governed by the rule laid down.'[28] While Bryant's Station placed upon its congregation the requirement that all were to 'bear reproof and to reprove each other in case of visible faults.'[29] In addition, members of the congregation were ordered not to 'commune with

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[24]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS.

[25]John Taylor, *Baptists on the American: a history of ten Baptist churches of which the author has been alternately a member*, 49-50, KHS.

[26]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS.

[27]Mt. Pleasant Church Records, 1790-1828, September 25th 1790, KHS.

[28]Mt. Pleasant Church Records, 1790-1828, September 25th 1790, KHS.

[29] Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS.

those who in the opinion of the Church, have not been baptized, on profession of their faith, or with those whom she has no Christian fellowship.'[30] Such rules may seem to the modern reader as going beyond the boundaries of the purely spiritual and to directly impact the everyday lives of the laity and indeed may seem excessive. Yet for most individuals during this period there was little distinction between one's religious life and one's secular life. Such rules were important for creating a sense of community and belonging amongst the congregation. By establishing how individuals were to act, both within the congregational community and importantly in their dealings with wider secular world, the denominations were offering a sense of identity. Settlers had a community they could identify, composed of all those individuals who followed the rules of the congregation, and they could belong to it in a way that was more manifest, more present, than anything offered by secular community. Nor were the Baptist alone in this. Every denomination passed similar rules and laws for their congregations to one extent or another. The East Hickman congregation went as far as to state in July of 1800 that 'it should be deem'd [sic] the duty of this Church to hear & determine the Grievences [sic] that may Arise between its members & the world... it was [also] conclud'd [sic] that in all Cases where there was an Appearance of Defraud in the member the Church should Enquire into the matter.'[31] Such rules, though voluntary, offered a way for settlers to order their lives.

A Democratic System:

When compared to the establishment and development of civil institutions in the same period there can be little surprise that settlers frequently turned to the congregation instead of their local civil institution. Historians such as Ellen Eslinger and Craig Thompson Friend have argued that during the same period that the Elkhorn Association and the Transylvania Presbytery saw such growth, local civil government within Kentucky was largely weak and ineffectual. Problems and questions of local civil government did not stop there either, as there were frequent debates about who could and could not be involved in the electoral process for such offices. Kentucky had an established but informal tradition, which permitted wider suffrage than Virginia laws

[30]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS.

[31]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept 1842, July 1800, UKSC.

allowed.[32] Yet such informal traditions could lead to confusion, as in Jefferson County and Bourbon County in 1789. In the elections for the Virginia assembly, disputes erupted about the franchise in these counties. Within Jefferson County, one candidate argued for strict adherence to the Virginia suffrage laws while in Bourbon County another candidates argued for a broader interpretation.[33] What ensued was a piecemeal county by county understanding of suffrage and could cause confusion especially for settlers outside the few towns. Within Virginia, suffrage was restricted to 'every free white man who, at the time of elections for delegates or committee-men in the said county or district respectively, shall have been for one year preceding in possession of twenty-five acres of land with a house and plantation thereon, or one hundred acres of land without a house or plantation, in such county or district, claiming an estate for life at least in the said land, in his own right, or in right of his wife, shall have a vote, or be capable of being chosen at such elections respectively.'[34] The nature of Kentucky settlement in the period would have resulted in many, if not most, of the population being unable to participate because the majority of the white male population did not own land as they either squatted on land, rented land from larger land-holders, or had not yet secured title to recently claimed lands.35 Consequently, Kentucky's response was often to ignore the Virginia limitations on suffrage, instead often offering any free male over the age of 21 and who had been resident in the territory for at least two years or more the right to vote. This interpretation of almost universal suffrage for males would ultimately be confirmed a few years later in article three of Kentucky's first constitution and then would be reconfirmed in the second constitution of 1799.[36]

Even with this liberal interpretation, because so many settlers were highly mobile and had not been resident within the state for the required two years, many of Kentucky's settlers were still left disenfranchised and unconnected to the process of

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[32]Humphrey Marshall, *The History of Kentucky: Exhibiting an Account of the Modern Discovery; Settlement; Progressive Improvement; Civil and Military Transactions; and the Present State of the Country* (Geo. S. Robinson, Printer, 1824), 197–198.

[33]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 93.

[34]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 57-58.

[35]Lee Soltow, 'Kentucky Wealth at the End of the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 3 (1983): 617–33; Lee Soltow, 'Wealth Inequality in the United States in 1798 and 1860', *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 66, no. 3 (1984): 444–51.

[36]A Constitution or Form of Government for the State of Kentucky, April 19 1792, KHS; The Constitution or Form of Government of the State of Kentucky, 1799, KHS.

government within the territory. A significant portion of the white male population was indeed disenfranchised by even this liberal understanding, yet for women and African-Americans the law was clear they were to be denied any sort of participation in local politics and government. This though was not the case within the local congregation. Many of these settlers would have turned instead to their local congregation, to which they would have felt a stronger and more immediate connection and in whose governance they were more directly involved. Indeed, the typical congregation was often more democratic in its governance than many civil institutions of the time, offering such settlers a strong sense of belonging as they had an important say in the way they functioned.

Baptist congregations were often the most democratic in this regard. Unlike Presbyterian congregations that were part of a local presbytery which in turn was part of a regional Synod, or an Episcopalian or Catholic congregation which was part of a larger diocese, or even a Methodist class meeting which was part of a graduated system of larger meetings culminating in the annual General Meeting, Baptist doctrines meant that individual congregations were completely independent entities. From the very formation of a new congregation through to their ordinary day-to-day operation, nearly every decision, by the Baptist congregation, can be viewed as an act of democracy. The opening pages of Bryant's Station's records are a typical example. Writing of their formation the congregation recorded: 'Sundry disposed Baptists in the neighbourhood of Bryant on North Elkhorn at several times Considered their scattered state, and the want of Discipline among themselves, after mature Deliberation...[and] after Consultation with ourselves and the help present we agree to unite and form a Constitution and adopt the Philadelphia Confession of Faith.'[37] These opening words in one form or another appear in most surviving Baptist congregation records. East Hickman, for example, again followed much the same pattern recording their foundation as 'Being dismissed from Boone & Constituted upon the Confession of Faith This 15th Day of June 1787 By the Assistance of Our Brethren S. Smith and Ambrose Dudley who constituted this church then consisted of Nineteen Members... those members then being Confirmed as a Church Proceeded to make their own Rules.'[38] Such statements from these congregations and others strongly suggest that the decision on whether to form new

[37]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, April 15 1786, KHS.

[38]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, 15th June 1787, UKSC.

congregations or not, lay with those gathered and no one else. Congregations were established from the bottom up. The decision was made after, in their own words, 'consultation with ourselves.' In Bryant's Station's case, this decision was made after consultation of eight individuals, four men and four women. East Hickman was a bit larger at nineteen members, again both male and female, yet the process was the same, involving a group of individuals who came together and created a congregation through mutual decision.

This act of democracy in the backcountry alone would have been for many settlers their first direct participation in such a process. This was a process that at its roots would have made a settler feel connected to, and part of, something profoundly important. However, it was not, by far, the last act such congregations would have made. Even a cursory reading of any Baptist congregation's records shows that nearly every decision was made in community during the monthly meeting. During its first full year as a congregation (July 1787 to July 1788) the East Hickman congregation voted on five appointments, two rule changes, and one consultation on the building of a meetinghouse. Each of these decisions required that a majority of the congregation be in agreement. Such acts of democracy were so important to the congregation as a whole that in August 1788 the congregation codified this idea writing: 'Agreed that all propositions coming before the Church shall be determined by a Majority, except in Admission or Dismission [sic] of members and in that case a Unanimity be obtained if Possible.'[39]

Requiring unanimity on matters of membership within the congregation resulted in another thirty votes (nineteen separate votes for membership by experience, five by letter, and six dismissals) during East Hickman's first year. In all, during its first year East Hickman's congregation engaged in thirty-eight separate acts of democracy, an average of 3.45 votes a meeting.[40] Nor was East Hickman unique in this regard. Bryant's Station, for example, passed much the same legislation as East Hickman in May of 1786 codifying in its records 'all matters of teching [sic] fellowship to be Determined by unanimity, and all other matters by a Majority.' During this year, May

[39]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, August 1788, UKSC.

[40]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, February 1788, June 1788, UKSC. No meeting was held in February or June of 1788. In both cases no mention was made in the record for the lack of the monthly meeting. Though in the case of February this may have been due to weather conditions.

1786 to May 1787 Bryant's Station engaged in fifty-one votes. These votes like East Hickman covered a wide range of topics from for admission to church membership, (thirty-seven), to appointments for various church offices, (twelve), finally to other church business, (two). In all, Bryant's Station held on average 4.25 votes per month.

For such congregations, the full participation of the membership was so important that non-attendance of more than one consecutive meeting often resulted in the individual in question being called to account. Often the congregation would send one of its elders, deacons, or ministers, to 'known their reasons' for not attending and to report to the congregation at the next meeting of any extenuating circumstances.[41] In many cases, these first steps often resulted in the individual returning to communion within the congregation but refusal could, and often did, result in expulsion. 1799, for example, saw both James Hawkins and David Fryar excluded from membership in East Hickman Congregation for refusing regularly to attend church meetings.[42]

Baptist congregations may have been the most democratic of the denominations in the Kentucky backcountry, but nearly every denomination to some extent engaged in a similar process. The opening pages of Christ Church's record book, the only Episcopalian congregation in Kentucky for many years, recorded both the names of twenty-seven individuals who agreed to support the congregation financially along with the names of the congregation's first vestry.[43] The vestry acted in much the same way as the monthly Baptist's meeting did, voting on all issues that pertained to the running of the congregation with the whole congregation regularly electing the vestry. Indeed within Kentucky the vestry was often more important than in similar Episcopalian congregations back east or in England, holding significant power. The central organization of the denomination in Kentucky, and indeed west of Cumberland Gap, was relatively weak for much of this period. This along with a constant shortage of suitable ministers to guide the congregation between 1780's and 1810 meant much of the authority that should have been invested in either a bishop or priest fell to the vestry.[44] Finally, even the Presbyterians engaged in democracy with congregations

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[41]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, March 1787, KHS.

[42]East Hickman Baptist Church Fayette County Ky Records June 15 1787 - Sept 1842, April 1799 - August 1799, UKSC.

[43]Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], August 25th 1808, UKSC.

[44] Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm],

putting forth written calls to chosen ministers. David Rice recorded in his journal that he received a written call from more than 300 men before he had even moved into the territory.[45]

The regularity of meetings and the immediate presence of the local congregation meant that for many settlers their local congregation was the most recognized form of a community that they would have known. The transformation though from a local congregation to one of governance of the local community occurred naturally as settlers turned to this one institution that was so immediate in their lives. These congregations were typically often the only institution in which settlers were able to fully participate. The congregation's evolution into one of the most basic forms of governance in the backcountry, though, did not end with such acts of democracy. The local congregation became for many a way to settle disputes both between members and between members and the outside world.

Ecclesiastical Courts Versus Civil Courts:

The act of legislation of the Virginia assembly that created Kentucky in the closing days of 1776 established not only the geographical bounds of the new county but also provided for the establishment of 'the administration of justice' through the creation of Quarter Session courts.[46] These courts were, along with the office of county sheriff, to be one of the major centres of government, being the dispenser of law and order for the region. The rationale for such courts was in the words of Friend as 'principle agents of local development and order, not only trying criminal and civil cases but complementing Virginia's laws, overseeing militia activities, setting tavern prices...and facilitating community affairs as well.'[47] A 1782 act of the Virginia Assembly expanded the powers of Kentucky's court system granting 'jurisdiction of all treasons, murders, felonies, crimes and misdemeanors [sic] committed in the said

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August 25th 1808, UKSC; Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : vol. 1,* 480-500; Walter B. Posey, 'The Protestant Episcopal Church: An American Adaptation', *The Journal of Southern History* 25, no. 1 (1 February 1959): 3–30.

[45]Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68.

[46]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia*, Vol. IX, 1821, 258-259.

[47]Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* ,185.

district, except those made triable [sic] by the constitution before the general court.'[48] After separation, a 1792 act of the Kentucky Assembly confirmed the older 1782 act of the Virginia Assembly.[49] The 1792 act specifically confirmed the expansion of powers of Kentucky's court system granting 'power, authority and Jurisdiction to hear and determine all causes whatsoever, at the common law or in chancery within their respective counties, except such criminal causes where the judgement upon conviction shall be for the loss of life or member.'[50] This was a tall order for any institution and more so in a territory that was in constant growth and development during these early years.

Historians have pointed out that these courts often took time to fully function as offices needed to be filled, and the proper structures instituted.[51] This was made all the more difficult as Kentucky continued to create many new counties in its first twenty years. Between 1780 and 1800 Kentucky grew from just one county (Kentucky County) to forty-three different counties. Indeed, the first three original counties of Fayette, Lincoln, and Jefferson were all subdivided multiple times during this period. Lincoln was divided the most often at six different times, roughly every 3.3 years. Fayette followed with four divisions over the same period followed by Jefferson at three. With each division came the requirement of establishing new courts, appointing new justices and sheriffs, along with other required civil institutions. These took time even after Kentucky became familiar with the process. In 1783, for instance, the administration of Fayette County often ceased to function because of the lack of a quorum in the county court.[52] One reason for the low attendance was that many of the court's officers did not reside in the counties in which they held office. For instance, in Jefferson County only four of the six men appointed to various offices in 1781 lived in the county at the time

[48]Hening, *'Statutes at Large', Laws of Virginia,* Vol. XI, 1821, 85.

[49]Littel, *Statute Law of Kentucky,* Vol I 1792- 1797, 80-101.

[50]Littel, *Statute Law of Kentucky,* Vol I 1792- 1797, 94.

[51]Patricia Watlington, *Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792.* ([S.l.]: Univ Of North Carolina Pr, 2012), 73–74; Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 89–90; Elizabeth A Perkins and Shane, John Dabney, *Border Life Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 119–120;William C. Richardson, *An Administrative History of Kentucky Courts to 1850* (Archives Branch, Public Records Division, Kentucky Dept. for Libraries and Archives, 1983), 2–6.

[52]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 91.

of their appointment.[53] Barren County created in 1798 out of the counties of Warren and Green was unable to hold its first court until June of the following year.[54] Pendleton County, created in the same year as Barren, took until August of 1799 before it was able to convene its first court.[55]

There can be little doubt that county courts found problems reaching the correct number for a quorum and in having the witnesses and defendants showing on court dates. Within the pages of nearly every issue of the *Kentucky Gazette* of the period can be found announcements pertaining to defendants who had not shown at the court day. One such announcement placed in the August 10, 1793 edition of the *Kentucky Gazette* called for one John Cobb and Thomas Carr to appear at the September court day to enter pleas in a case brought against them by William Ellis.[56] The court required that the announcement be carried in the *Gazette* for two months and another copy be 'published some Sunday at the front door of the Baptist Meetinghouse in the town of Lexington immediately after divine service.'[57] Such announcements posted within the *Gazette* and at the meetinghouse typically followed much the same format, stating the case involved along with the names of those individuals who had not appeared, followed by the requirement that the announcement appear both in the *Kentucky Gazette* as well as being posted at one of the churches in the closest town. The involvement of denominational buildings in the legal process is significant suggesting that even in the realm of the purely secular world the local congregation was seen as a focal point of the community. It was there, at the local congregation that the local community, or a significant portion at least, gathered on a regular basis. Indeed, the local congregation was so central to community life that the civil court system even found it advantageous to post legal notices there. The regularity with which such announcements appeared within the pages of the local newspaper and their posting at local churches suggests that non–appearance was a common occurrence on court days. When one considers the problems of travel and the size of many early Kentucky counties, this is unsurprising.

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[53] Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 91.

[54] Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : vol. 1*, 43; Barren County, Kentucky Order Book, June 1798, KHS.

[55] Pendelton Court Record Book, KHS.

[56] *Kentucky Gazette,* August 10th 1793, KDL.

[57] *Kentucky Gazette,* August 10th 1793, KDL.

Even though the court usually met at the largest town of the county, the scattered nature of Kentucky's settlement meant many did not live within easy access of such towns. Even when the court was able to meet and all required parties were present, many of the cases brought forth were individual and often material in argument typically dealing with issues of private lawsuits, inheritance, or land cases. Many cases also involved expensive lawyers, and the cost of lawyers meant that for many ordinary settlers, the cost of using the county courts was prohibitive. One individual from the period William Duane, from Pennsylvania, succinctly summed up the feelings many ordinary settlers would have had about the civil court systems. Duane reminded potential plaintiffs in 1805 to 'recollect the length of time suits have been kept in courts; let every one recollect the sums of money paid as costs; let any one recollect the fees paid to lawyers, and how many thousands of dollars their annual incomes are stated at.' He concluded 'do you not dread and abhor a law suit as an Egyptian plague? Would you not sustain a considerable injustice rather than go and ask justice? Is not the law shunned by *wise* and *good* men, while it is sought by the *rogues* and *fools?* Yea, are not more *ruined* than *relieved* who go to court?'[58] Nor was Duane alone with such advice. George Fox, the founder of the Quaker denomination informed his members that 'law-suits are at best tedious. They often destroy brotherly love in the individuals while they continue. They excite also, during this time, not unfrequently, a vindictive spirit, and lead to family-feuds and quarrels.'[59] Fox's solution was that 'no member should appeal to law; but that he should refer his different to arbitration, by persons of exemplary character, in the society.'[60] Such views of the civil legal system seems to have had an impact with settlers often turning towards local ecclesiastical courts in order to find solutions to their problems.

During its first year of operation, June 1799 to June 1800, Barren County court saw fifty-nine cases brought before it. Of these, forty-four out of fifty-nine, 74%, were

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[58]William Duane, *Sampson against the Philistines, or, The Reformation of Lawsuits: And Justice Made Cheap....* (Washington, D.C.: W. Duane, 1805). 32.

[59]Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism. Taken from a View of the Education and Discipline, Social Manners, Civil and Political Economy, Religious Principles, and Character of the Society of Friends* (Philadelphia: Samuel Stansbury, 1806),70.

[60]Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism,* 69; Jack D. Marietta and G.S. Rowe, *Troubled Experiment: Crime and Justice in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). 48.

private cases brought by one settler against another.[61] This meant that only one in four cases brought to the county court were cases that of the commonwealth against an individual. Of these remaining fifteen cases, the vast majority, ten of the fifteen related to serious crimes such as theft or robbery (three cases), illegal use of a firearm (one case), breach of the peace (one case), or related to the court system itself through contempt of court.[62] Only five, or 8% of all cases within this year, related to moral crimes, typically that of drunkenness or swearing.[63] Barren County may have been a newly created county, but the results of its court systems were fairly typically for the period. Harrison County for example during the same period, 1799-1800, saw much the same. Within this period, eighty-six cases were brought before the court. Of the seventy-four cases of which the nature of the case is known, a vast majority that were brought forth related to private cases, thirty-one out of the seventy-four, 41.8% or to the functioning of the county government, twenty-eight, 37.8%. Indeed, during this period there was only one case, that of swearing, of a moral nature brought forth during this year. Of the cases brought forth in Muhlenberg County during the same period sixteen of its twenty-two cases, 72% related to either private matters or to county functions. In short, for much of the period the court systems within Kentucky generally, and within the county court systems in particular, were dominated by private cases of one settler suing another or of matters of county function. Few cases outside these areas found their way through the courts.

As such cases of individual nature took much of the time of the county and Quarter Session Courts, the number of cases for moral crimes such as bastardy, adultery, blasphemy, and drunkenness decreased. Yet the rarity of such cases did not mean Kentucky, as a whole was any more moral than other parts of the country or that such antisocial behaviours went unchecked. Such cases were brought forth, by individuals to their local congregations. Such ecclesiastical courts often occurred at the same monthly meeting where decisions of membership or other church business occurred. An April 1788 meeting of East Hickman congregation is a prime example of this. This gathering saw the meeting both conduct church business in the form of appointing a temporary moderator, and the acceptance of two new members by experience, as well as the

[61]Barren County, Kentucky Order Book, June 1798- June 1800, KHS.

[62]Barren County, Kentucky Order Book, June 1798- June 1800, KHS.

[63]Barren County, Kentucky Order Book, June 1798- June 1800, KHS.

dismissal of a case against Jno. Price after an investigation found 'report [against him] appeared to be groundless' in nature.[64] The actual purported infraction by Brother Price can never be known as the record only states that it was 'groundless.' Yet the types of cases that could and were brought before a congregation's ecclesiastical court were varied. 1799 found East Hickman's court take up ordinary cases related to disagreements between members (both were censured for 'their tart and uncharitable Conversation to each other') swearing, non-attendance at meetings, and refusing to obey the ecclesiastical court.[65] In addition, there were on occasion theological cases relating to questions of slavery and deism. But the court also oversaw cases that would have ordinarily have fallen into the realm of the civil courts, hearing two cases relating to debt and three for drunkenness.[66] East Hickman was typical of other congregations and denominations in hearing cases that went beyond the realm of the theological. The Presbyterian congregation of Walnut Hill in 1795, for example, heard a case of adultery and bastardy.[67] Indeed, it was cases dealing with morality, and in particular issues such as adultery and bastardy, which for most members of the denominations moved from the county courts into the ecclesiastical courts. David McKee brought forth to the court mentions of a scandal that had been making the rounds. McKee admitted that he 'had been guilty of criminal commune with' one Nancy Trible but ‘he was not the father of her child.’[68] The court offered its forgiveness and mercy allowing McKee to remain a full member of the community for in their words 'they [would have not] known his guilt had he not voluntarily acknowledged it.'[69]

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[64]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, April 1788, UKSC.

[65]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, August 1799, UKSC.

[66]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, August 1799, UKSC.

[67]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

[68]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

[69]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

Ecclesiastical courts argued their right to hear such cases with many congregations passing regulations to that extent. Mount Pleasant for example articulated early on that 'all private transgressions, especially a trespass against an individual undoubtable [sic] does come under the notice of and ought to be governed by the rule laid down.'[70] The right of such courts was raised by one member of the East Hickman congregation in July 1800 asking 'whether it should be deem'd the duty of this Church to hear & Determine the Grievences [sic] that may Arise between its members & the world[?]'[71] The congregation concluded, after much debate, 'that in all Cases where there was an Appearance of Defraud in the member that the Church should Enquire into the matter.'[72] This right of ecclesiastical courts to hear cases that should have rightly belonged to the civil system, as in cases of debt, or of adultery and bastardy, seems to have been accepted by the laity with few questions as they contentiously brought cases to their local congregation. The years between 1799 and 1801, for example, saw congregants of East Hickman bring thirty-two cases to the court, among these were three cases related to debt; three for drunkenness, along with singular cases of violence, swearing, lying, theft, and an accomplice to theft.[73] Bryant's Station's church court in the same period saw forty cases brought forth including cases of drunkenness, disorderly conduct, theft, and adultery.[74] On the whole, these numbers were in line with other congregations of the period. Accounts from The Elkhorn Association for 1799 to 1801 recorded eighty-one exclusions in total suggesting the extent of cases coming before the courts, as only a small proportion of cases led to exclusion.[75] In addition, not all congregations reported their numbers to the association and those that did, only recorded those who had still been excluded from community by the time of the next meeting (not all exclusions were a year-long). What can be learned from these numbers was that the laity found within their local ecclesiastical court a way to seek justice for daily situations that could not be found in the state's county courts. These courts were

[70]Mt. Pleasant Church Records, 1790-1828, KHS.

[71]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, July 1800, UKSC.

[72]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, July 1800, UKSC.

[73]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15 1787-Sept 1842, January 1799-December 1801, UKSC.

[74]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, January 1799-December 1801, KHS.

[75]Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1799-1801, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

used for much more than normal theological or religious crime, and took on cases as wide ranging as debt and poverty, to drunkenness and adultery.

Through such actions, the ecclesiastical courts became a way to bind the members of the denominations even more closely together, for the verdict of a case was but one part of the whole process. The ecclesiastical courts of Kentucky worked much in the same way as a court system and rudimentary police force with what amounted to their own investigative arm. The court investigated all cases brought forth, and the court often required a report be drawn up and presented at the next congregational meeting. Such procedures were in operation from almost the first settlement of Kentucky. The case of William Peyton of Bryant's Station in 1786 was a case in point.[76] In October of that year the church records recorded 'William Peyton came before the Church and acknowledged he had been Drunk.'[77] Yet even with an outright acknowledgement from Peyton, the church court still ordered that 'he be under the dealing of the Church till further information [was provided].'[78] The court then adjourned until the following month to provide time for investigators to collect such information as the court required. At the next church meeting, in December of that year, the court again took up the case of Peyton and yet again he acknowledged his crime. The court heard the information that had been gathered against him, and after consideration of all the relevant information and testimonies, the court announced that 'he [Peyton] not be considered a member in this Church until he come in by repentance.'[79] The use of further investigation to seek evidence for a case was not exclusively a Baptist practice. The case of David McKee at the Presbyterian congregation of Walnut Hill demonstrates how the Presbyterians in Kentucky followed much the same procedure. McKee brought the case forth on his own and acknowledged his guilt, yet still the court sought further information before it would reach a verdict.[80] At the following session, the court heard the information and finally passed its judgement on McKee writing that he 'acknowledged his sorrow & repentance for said crime, so that he satisfied the session

[76]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, October 1786 – December 1786, KHS.

[77]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, October 1786, KHS.

[78]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, October 1786, KHS.

[79]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, December 1786, KHS.

[80]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

that they agree to restore him to his former standing.'[81] McKee's case was fairly straightforward since he brought forth the accusation against himself yet other cases required much more than the gathering of other information but required the calling of witnesses as well. The Rev. James Crawford took note of a case from Jessamine congregation in 1794 between one Hanna Campbell and Mary Lowrey.[82] The case revolved around accusations of slander by Campbell against Lowery. Cases of slander should have fallen under the purview of the civil courts though such cases were often ignored by Kentucky's civil system. Consequently, many church members resorted to the church courts instead of the civil courts to seek justice in such cases. In the case of Campbell against Lowery the accusations were considered so important that investigators called six additional witnesses to appear before the church court. When some of the witnesses refused to appear the case was held over until the next session. The outcome of the case will never be known as the verdict of the case did not survive yet the case is important with its suggestion of the importance of witnesses to such cases as slander. Baptist congregations such as Bryant's Station and East Hickman were known to establish committees of investigation consisting of Elders, Deacons, and trusted laity to interview the witness and make reports on cases. The Presbyterians also called numerous witnesses to attend meetings. When witnesses refused to appear or to be interviewed, the courts held over the case until such time as collaborative information could be found. The reason was that the ecclesiastical courts of Kentucky took all cases brought before them seriously. Even if congregants brought accusations against themselves or if a case seemed to be clearly defined, the investigators still believed that it was their duty to investigate the case carefully and thoroughly. They saw their jurisdiction as being as broad as possible even though their course of punishments was limited. Unlike the civil system that had powers to jail, and fine the guilty, among other punishments, the ecclesiastical courts were limited to at its most extreme exclusion and excommunication of a member for his or her crime.

Such punishment was the most extreme that any congregation could pass down and typically was used as means of last resort. However, in many instances the guilty

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[81]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

[82]Jessamine Congregation records, June 21 1794: Papers of James Crawford: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

would return to the fold suitably humbled only a few months later. This was no easy task, however, requiring the guilty member to come before the congregation as a whole and show repentance for their crime. Though most church records are sparse in the exact formula used, they hint at a procedure that followed much the same pattern as new members who joined, at least in the Baptist denomination, through membership by experience. Such formulas were known as conversion narratives and required the candidate to speak publicly, before the gathered congregation, about their faith and their journey towards membership.[83]

This tried and true formula also seems to have played a role in the returning to good standing those members who had been convicted by the congregation's ecclesiastical court. Of these returns, congregations like East Hickman provide some insight with two cases. The first is of Martin Stafford in 1787. Of his return East Hickman's records reported 'Br. Martin Stafford (who has laid under the Centure [sic] of this Church eversince [sic] the 10th of Nov. 1787, having given the Church satisfaction is again restored.'[84] Later entries were more explicit in what was required. The case against Br. Hutts, for example, nearly a decade later in 1799 saw him return to the fold after 'appearing before the church & making [sic] an Open Acknowledgement of his fault in Conversation with Br. Jos'h Baker [the other convicted member].'[85] The important phrases were 'having given the church satisfaction,' and 'makeing [sic] an open acknowledged of his fault.'[86] Such language hints at the same formula used in accepting new members. These members were required to go before the congregation as a whole and both acknowledge their crime and show repentance. The act of repentance was very much an act of community building. By requiring the guilty party to stand in front of neighbours, friends, and family, and acknowledge their guilt and ask for forgiveness, they were asking the whole community to forgive and repair any damaged bonds of relationships that might have occurred.

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[83]Though such narratives were often verbal in nature many still survive and can be found woven into other narratives such as those of camp meetings or personal histories. One prime example of this is the conversion narrative of Daniel Trube interwoven within his autobiography.

[84]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept 1842, October 1788, UKSC.

[85]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept 1842, March 1799, UKSC.

[86]East Hickman Baptist Church, Fayette county, Ky. Records, June 15, 1787-Sept 1842, October 1788, March 1799.

The use of the phrase ‘the Church’ in both cases also strongly points to such congregations’ own rules that required votes on any matter that pertained to the body of the congregation as a whole. Nor were the Baptists alone in the use of this formula, as the case of David McKee from the Presbyterian congregation of Walnut Hill suggests. In recording the case, the congregation wrote that 'they agree to restore him to his former standing in the church and have ordered him a certificate, but have not required public acknowledgements, because they had not evidence that the scandal was publicly known, nor would they have known his guilt had he not voluntarily acknowledged it.'[87] Even at the Presbytery level, such a formula was used as in the case against the Rev. Adam Rankin in 1792 when the Transylvania Presbytery brought a case against him over the use of Watt's psalms. Rankin was called to account and was told 'to acknowledge these things proved against him.'[88] His refusal resulted in his expulsion from the presbytery and limits placed on his ministry. But like cases brought forth at the congregational level, Rankin was required to acknowledge his crime and make an act of repentance before being returned to the fold, something he ultimately refused to do. In doing so the Presbytery was left with no choice but to continue the ban. The pattern is unsurprising as it would have been familiar to those who wished to return to standing after a conviction and those of the congregation or presbytery who ultimately made the decision.

Studied in isolation the impact of individual cases, or indeed individual ecclesiastical courts, would have shown such institutions as having at best limited effect in the backcountry. Most congregations as previous chapters have shown were not large; the average congregation across all the denominations was well under a hundred individuals throughout much of the period. They were also importantly voluntary societies with little power of enforcing their verdicts on any who refused to acknowledge their jurisdiction, as the case of the Rev. Adam Rankin made clear. Yet collectively the establishment, use, and development of ecclesiastical courts did have an impact in the backcountry. For many settlers the ecclesiastical court of their local congregation was seen as the most effective way to seek justice especially when the case involved intangible assets such as an individual’s reputation. Such courts met more

[87]Session of Walnut Hill, August 17th 1795: Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, John Dabney Shane Collection, Manuscript Collection of Church Records, Letters Diaries and Other Papers relating to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio, 1778-1858.

[88]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 26th 1792, UKSC.

often, on a monthly basis, versus their civil counterparts that convened only once a quarter. The ecclesiastical courts were also located more locally not requiring defendants, witnesses, and plaintive to travel vast distances. Their verdicts would be well known to the neighbours and associates of those involved in the case and could thus restore reputations. Finally, their importance was as part of a wider effort by the major denominations to bring order and stability to backcountry areas.

The denominations occupied an important area in which civil institutions were unable to keep up with the fast pace of expansion that had been occurring since the earliest days of settlement. Their intention may not have been consciously to become the agents of society and the creators of community, yet to meet their own ends they became just that. Ecclesiastical courts in particular became an important tool in this creation. With the creation of physical church buildings, denominations saw an important if not significant increase in the stability and growth of individual congregations. The creation and development of camp meetings offered the denominations a way to reach beyond their own congregations to a wider body of settlers. The development and use of social structures such as educational institutions, societies, and welfare programs formed these strangers into a community. Within this context, ecclesiastical courts became the institution that established boundaries both theological and moral within which these settlers could interact. Their importance therefore was one of community. Ecclesiastical courts offered the laity and clergy alike a shared context within which they could operate. Therein lies their importance, not as a singular institution but part of a larger structure. The backcountry as accounts often recounted was a lonely place. Settlers while moving west in hope of a better life for them and their families often longed for those parts of civilization and community they left behind. The local congregation became a focal point for many as the only major institution that both kept pace with settlement and offered a sense of security. Part of that security was found in the use of the ecclesiastical court system as an alternative to a more distant, antagonistic civil legal system.

Conclusion:

The denominations were important agents of order in Kentucky and in particular within the backcountry of the state. Through the creation of church buildings, the development of camp meetings, and church institutions, denominations brought independent settlers into contact and into community with one and other. This alone

would have been invaluable in the creation of a wider Kentucky identity yet collectively the denominations went a step further and were involved in the process of ordering the backcountry as well. Civil government may have created the bounds of counties, appointed county officers, made provisions for the protection of the county, yet for the ordinary settler this would have had little impact on their lives.

Indeed, for many settlers the organizing process began at the very basic level of the local congregation. It was within the local congregation that many settlers first truly engaged with the democratic process, playing an important role in the calling of ministers as well as the election of elders, deacons, and other lay positions in their local congregation. The process went further still with congregation rules often brought forth for debate and voted upon at the monthly meeting. In a very real sense, the ideals of the young republic were played out for many settlers not at the county seat but within their own congregation. Such direct use of the democratic methods offered the settler a reason to become invested in their local congregation. This investment, in turn, was the ground on which order was brought forth. Local congregations often became the epicentres of judicial power with setters bringing cases not to their county court system but instead to the ecclesiastical court of the local congregation. It was there that they sought justice for a wide variety of cases from theological questions to more serious cases of adultery, bastardy, and even debt or theft. As voluntary societies, such courts had little power to enforce their decisions. Yet the democratic nature of these bodies meant they were often listened to. Through the use of the democratic process and ecclesiastical courts the denominations were able to create both a community and a framework within which such communities could both exist and function in the backcountry.

This system though was fragile at the best of times. It was rooted in the competition between the various denominations each of which sought converts while placing their own demands for resources and attention from settlers. Ultimately these denominations were also free voluntary associations lacking, unlike in previous colonies and territories in the New World, even legal backing for any of their actions. No settler was compelled by law to join or even support their local congregation. Yet they not only survived, they grew in numbers and strength surviving even theological disagreements that could have destroyed the structures they built. These were disagreements such as the debates over theological arguments between various factions of the Presbyterian denomination over support of camp meetings, or the disagreement that resulted in a

schism within the Cumberland presbytery, or the hymn controversy that led to the trial and expulsion of Adam Rankin from the ranks of Kentucky's Presbyterian clergy. Nor were the Presbyterians alone in surviving such disagreements. The Baptist community, for example, faced constant and even heated arguments both between congregations of the same association but also between associations themselves. Questions on the role of slaves within a congregation and the role of education were some of the major battles fought. The following chapter will examine in detail, some of these issues and challenges that the denominations faced.

Chapter Six

Challenges to Community:

As local institutions, the denominations were deeply trusted by many settlers. They were, more often than not, the first institution, civil or ecclesial, to bring the collection of individuals, families, and strangers that constituted Kentucky's population, together in any form of community. This was especially true for many of those settlers who lived outside the few established towns such as Harrodsburgh, Boonesborough, or Lexington. Their authority, whether real or only perceived by settlers, derived from their ability to fulfil a needed connection between settlers and the greater society. Ministers were trusted individuals and the denominations they represented were trusted institutions; what they stated carried weight with settlers. At first glance, this system may seem to have been a fragile one at the best of times. This system was rooted in the competition between the various denominations each of which sought converts, while placing their own demands for resources and attention on settlers. Ultimately these denominations were also free voluntary associations lacking, unlike in previous colonies and territories in the New World, the power of legal compulsion for any of their actions. No settler was compelled by law to join or even support their local congregation.

When disagreements within and between the congregations occurred, they had the potential to cause significant harm to the work of the denomination. Whether personal or theological, disagreements had the potential to damage or even destroy the sense of community that the denominations had built and undermine their standing among the settlers. Yet more often than not, the congregations were able to rise above such conflicts, suggesting the power that the congregations held and the importance of the idea of community they represented. Two controversies, in particular, that struck the Presbyterian denomination during these years are useful examples of both the potential damage that could be caused and the power of the local congregations. The first was what has come to be known as the Watt's Hymnal Controversy and occurred in the latter half of the 1790's. The controversy, though minimal in the harm ultimately caused, was nevertheless important because of its involvement of one minister's theological stance against the wider denomination. This controversy, in particular, demonstrated that even the most basic dispute, in this case over the use of a well-known hymnal, could undo much of the work of a denomination. The second dispute, referred to as the Cumberland Presbytery Schism, was much more serious. The schism centred on the presbytery's

camp meeting activities and its ordination of several questionable candidates.[1] The schism ultimately involved a revolt of the entire presbytery along with a significant portion of its congregations and laity from the authority of Kentucky's Presbyterian Synod.

Watt's Hymnal Controversy:

The Watt's Hymnal controversy was one of the first serious internal conflicts to face the Presbyterian denomination in Kentucky and arose as a result of the actions of one of the denomination's own ministers, Adam Rankin, and a confrontation by the congregation, Pisgah, under his control. The hymnal at the centre of the controversy, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, was partially composed and fully compiled by Isaac Watt, a non-conformist Anglican, between 1707 and 1709.[2] The controversy within Kentucky developed from Watt's inclusion of many of his own songs and poetry in addition to the existing cannon of accepted Anglican psalms. Watt went further than just including new songs and poetry. He re-translated many of the existing psalms from older Greek and Latin text, importantly changing the accepted language in order to update their language for more contemporary congregations.[3] Since the mid-1780's Rankin had taken a hard line against the use of Watt's Hymnal in religious services, arguing that the *Psalms* and the *Songs of David* alone were the only acceptable and proper forms of hymns for such services.[4]

Rankin spent the next few years agitating for the removal of the popular hymnal not only from the congregations under his charge, but also from the wider presbytery.

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[1] Patricia U Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 139; Robert Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky : With a Preliminary Sketch of the Churches in the Valley of Virginia* (New York : R. Carter ; Lexington, Ky. : C. Marshall, 1847), 235.

[2]Christopher N Phillips, 'Cotton Mather Brings Isaac Watts's Hymns to America; Or, How to Perform a Hymn without Singing It', *The New England Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2012): 203–21; John Knapp, 'Isaac Watts's Unfixed Hymn Genre', *Modern Philology* 109, no. 4 (2012): 463–82; Louis F Benson, *'The Early Editions of Watt's Hymns'*, Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1901-1930) 1, no. 4 (1902): 265–79.

[3]Knapp, '*Isaac Watts's Unfixed Hymn Genre'*, 463-470.

[4]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky*, 94–98; Sydney E Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 313; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians 1783-1840 a Collection of Source Materials*, First Edition edition (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 32–33; Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 172–73.

By 1789 the presbytery had had enough and formally warned Rankin over his agitation.[5] In doing so the presbytery was trying to preserve what it saw as a hymnal that was both popular among the laity and was also, importantly, widely available. Rankin did not take kindly to either the warning or the perceived interference of the presbytery over what he saw as important theological issues. Rankin felt the presbytery was wrong and took the case over the presbytery's head to the General Conference hoping to overrule the presbytery's concerns.[6] The General Conference 'listened to him patiently' though in the end it sided with the presbytery, reminding Rankin to remember the concepts of Christian charity towards those to whom he ministered and, in particular, to those who favoured Watt's hymns.[7] Indeed, there was little doubt that the General Conference would have done anything else but side with the presbytery in this matter, as the conference had accepted the use of the hymns by a majority of presbyteries as recently as 1783.[8] The conference's ruling against Rankin and its reminder to him of the need for Christian charity had little effect on him as he continued his campaign of agitation against the use of the hymnal. Indeed the matter seemed to have been settled, at least from the point of view of both the presbytery and General Conference, with neither institution taking any further action against Rankin till the matters where brought to a head by one of Rankin's own congregations.

Two years later, in 1791, Rankin's congregation at Pisgah had had enough of his agitation and presented a petition to the Transylvania Presbyter requesting the formal removal of Rankin and importantly 'a dismission [sic] from...[his] pastoral care.'[9] In and of itself, the petition would have been extraordinary; many congregations in Kentucky, it must be remembered, still struggled to secure the services of a minister. For a congregation to ask the presbytery to remove it from the care of a minister was exceptional and suggests that even by this early date, 1791, the congregation has started,

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[5]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 7th 1789, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKSC).

[6]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], October 7th 1789, UKCS.

[7]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky* , 88–89.

[8] Presbyterian Church in the U. S.A, *Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America : Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1706 to 1716; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, from A.D. 1717 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of New York, from A.D. 1745 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, from A.D. 1758 to 1788* (Philadelphia : Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841).

[9]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 27th 1791, May 10th 1791, UKSC.

for many settlers, to become even more important than the minister who either organized it or ministered to it. Pisgah's request to the presbytery importantly suggests that the congregation felt that it could survive as a community without a minister. Having already warned Rankin over the issue of the popular hymnal two years earlier, the request was ultimately unsurprising to the presbytery. The presbytery tried to convince Rankin to change his stance, yet a year later they were required to take more serious actions when again the congregation at Pisgah requested his removal. On the 25th of April 1792 Adam Rankin was called before a full session of the Transylvania Presbytery for trial.[10] The presbytery also called 'all persons concerned' with the case including two members of the congregation in question, James McDowell and Alexander Maxwell.[11] Each witness was sworn in and their statements taken. The next day the presbytery called one of their own, James Crawford, who had been tasked to investigate the charges against Rankin.[12] After hearing from all sides and appointing several ministers to investigate, the presbytery granted the congregation's request and 'suspended' Rankin from office.[13]

Despite this ruling, Rankin refused to acknowledge the authority of the presbytery over him or his suspension from the pulpit continuing his ministry without its consent. The stand off between the presbytery and Rankin only ended when Rankin 'withdrew' from the presbytery while at the same moment the presbytery 'suspended' him from office.[14] These events occurred simply over the use of a popular set of hymns within the liturgical setting and had the potential of splitting the denomination along theological lines. The controversy is enlightening in demonstrating the strength of community that quickly developed within local congregations. At the time of the Watt's hymnal controversy the Transylvania Presbytery had only existed for five years.[15] Presbyterianism in Kentucky was not much older, having its foundation in David Rice's

[10]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 25th 1792, UKSC.

[11]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 25th 1792, UKSC.

[12]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 26th 1792, UKSC.

[13]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 25th 1792, UKS.

[14]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 26th 1792, UKSC.

[15]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 25th 1792, UKSC.

arrival a few years earlier in 1783.[16] Yet within just five years of the denomination's foundation in the region, a congregation such as Pisgah felt that it could survive as a community and as a congregation without its minister. Presbytery records recount that Rankin took one elder, a 'Mr Logan' and around a hundred followers with him into exile, and in so doing he split a congregation, yet even this action had little long term impact on the development of the congregation or the denomination.[17] The congregation survived and continued to be part of the wider Presbyterian community within Kentucky. Outside the congregation in question there is little evidence that any other Elders, lay leaders, or the laity in general supported Rankin's views. No other congregation or ministers followed suite. The reason it was able to do so was that for many settlers the congregation itself was, it must be remembered, the center of many settlers' worlds. The congregation was often the only visible symbol of community in many areas. To divide such an institution over the use of a set of hymns should have been nothing less than the fracturing and division of the community, yet it was not.

More important for the denomination was Rankin's direct questioning of the presbytery's authority. By stating that he was responsible to divine authority alone and not to the presbytery, Rankin was questioning the presbytery's right to govern the denomination. The presbytery's authority went only as far as settlers allowed it to, for the denomination was ultimately a free association. Rankin's attack on the presbytery's authority could have jeopardized the ability of the denomination to provide order and community to the backcountry. If one of its own ministers called into question the authority of the denomination, then why should ordinary settlers follow it?

Ultimately, however, the impact that the Watt's hymnal controversy had within the Presbyterian denomination, and the wider Kentucky community, was limited. Rankin left along with a few others to join the Reformed Presbyterian Church with little lasting harm to either the congregation of Pisgah or to the wider denomination. The controversy could have caused much more harm as the congregation of Pisgah could

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[16]Robert Hamilton Bishop and David Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men Who Were Eminent and Useful in Their Day* (T. T. Skillman, 1824), 87; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians*, 30.

[17]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 25th 1792, UKSC; Robert McAfee, Clerk of the New Providence Church. Draper Manuscript Collection DM14CC102 (here after DM) Lyman Copeland Draper and State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Kentucky papers*, The Draper Manuscript ([Madison, Wis.]: State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey [distributor]).

have left the wider Presbyterian community or have been split along theological lines. The presbytery could have lost its perceived authority or status among its members, causing a significant number to leave for other denominations. Finally, the controversy could have fractured the denomination in Kentucky itself into smaller less effective organisations. Yet none of these events occurred. The importance of the controversy is found in Pisgah's response. It was there at the local congregational level that the decision to remove Rankin as its minister was first made. The local congregation was the one that brought forth the petition for the removal of Rankin from his office. In its dealings with Rankin both the presbytery and the larger synod had done little more than slap Rankin on the wrist for his views and actions. It took the concern of a congregation under Rankin's charge before either higher institution took the needed course of action to preserve the unity of the congregation's community. Rankin may have brought into question the authority of the presbytery and the wider hierarchical institutions of the denomination through his actions, but the controversy demonstrated for many settlers, where the power of the denomination really lay; at the level of the local congregation rather than with the central presbytery. In bringing a case against Rankin, Pisgah's authority would have only been strengthened for many settlers. For those in Pisgah, the community was more important than abstract theological questions about hymns. That concept of community was important to settlers and was one of the major reasons the denominations were so successful within Kentucky. The denominations were one of the few institutions that offered, with any regularity, a sense of community. Pisgah removed its minister and remained part of the wider Presbyterian denomination because of the community it offered. Those same reasons and actions were what lay behind one of the more turbulent events that struck the denomination a few years later in the Cumberland Presbytery.

The Cumberland Schism:

The work of the denominations was a delicate one. One miscalculation, mistake, or misinterpretation by a denomination could have serious consequences. Such mistakes could, and did, lead to a serious split within the denominations, for instance between those who supported Rankin's views on Watt's hymns and those who supported the wider denominational interpretation of its use. Ultimately though, the controversy should be viewed if not as a success of the Presbyterian presbytery's handling of the situation, at least as a success for the power of the local congregation. The structure and

procedures of both the denomination and the local congregation worked correctly and the controversy's long-term impact on the broader Presbyterian community in Kentucky was minimal. The events within the Cumberland presbytery a few years later are a useful example of the consequences that could occur when a denomination failed to act.

The Presbyterian denomination faced what would later come to be known as the Cumberland Schism in the first years of the nineteenth century and was a consequence of both the wider New Side schism of the mid eighteenth century and a distrust of camp meeting revivalism by the more orthodox members of Kentucky's Presbyterian denomination's hierarchy.[18] In 1802, the newly formed Synod of Kentucky created the presbytery of Cumberland from the southern portion of the larger Transylvania presbytery.[19] The Synod placed Thomas Craighead, a powerful camp meeting sceptic, as head of the newly formed presbytery. In and of itself, the appointment of Thomas Craighead should have been uncontroversial. Craighead had been one of the original members of the first presbytery in Kentucky back in 1786, long before the arrival of McGready or the ordination of Templin.[20] Craighead was an experienced and seasoned minister, highly educated and traditional in his understanding and approach to Presbyterianism. That orthodoxy though came into conflict with the presbytery as over time, those ministers who supported the work of camp meetings dominated.

Starting in 1803 those ministers who supported camp meetings began a process of licensing and ordaining candidates who often lacked the minimal educational or theological qualification associated with Presbyterianism in order to expand the work of the camp meetings.[21] In one instance, for example, in April of 1803 the presbytery recorded that Robert Guthrie, Robert Houston, Matthew Hall, and Samuel Hodge were to be 'authorize[ed] and license[d]...to make public appointments and exercise their gifts in exhortation in any congregation or settlement within the bounds of this presbytery' on little more than their ability to be 'useful to the souls of their fellowmen [sic].'[22] In all, the presbytery would license or ordain seventeen men who would have lacked the

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[18]Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 139; Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2004), 268-274.

[19]Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, October 14th 1802, KHS.

[20]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], May 17th 1786, UKSC.

[21]Minutes of the Cumberland Presbytery [microfilm], April 6th 1803, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville Kentucky (Hereafter LPTS).

[22]Minutes of the Cumberland Presbytery [microfilm], April 6th 1803, LPTS.

required education or indeed Presbyterian theological orthodoxy. James Haw, for example, admitted to the presbytery in April 1803 was a schismatic Methodist who was never required to swear fidelity to the tenets of Presbyterianism.[23]

By October 1804, Craighead and a few other orthodox ministers of the presbytery had written to the Synod to investigate the presbytery over its actions.[24] A committee was appointed to investigate, and all members of the presbytery were called to attend the next session of the synod. After investigation, the synod had found that the presbytery 'had frequently violated our rules of discipline' in particular with the appointment of James Haw and the other seventeen appointments.[25] Yet the power of the synod was limited as the ministers in question both refused to attend the synod or acknowledge its authority. In the end, the presbytery broke from the synod and wider denomination taking with it many of its congregations, lay members, and its churches.

The Cumberland Schism was without doubt hugely detrimental to the denomination as a whole. Unlike the Watt hymn controversy, the denomination lost control of a section of its ecclesiastical structure. Entire congregations, along with their institutions, broke away from the denomination. Following a similar pattern to that of the Pisgah congregation during the Watt hymn controversy, the congregations and laity that made up the Cumberland presbytery had an important say in the outcome of the complaint. It was, in other words, they the laity who made the choice to follow their ministers into exile.[26]

Robert Davidson, an early nineteenth-century historian of Kentucky Presbyterianism, recounted a report from one of the commissioners sent by the Synod to investigate the actions of the Cumberland Presbytery.[27] Davidson wrote that 'immediately after the Commission was dissolved, the majority of Cumberland Presbytery, or the Revival Members, as they loved to be styled, formed themselves into a Council, consisting of ministers, elders, and representatives from vacancies. All the

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[23]Minutes of the Cumberland Presbytery [microfilm], April 6th 1803, LPTS; Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians, 284; Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People , 445–456; Paul Keith Conkin, Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 151–158.

[24]Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, October 22nd 1804, KHS.

[25]Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, October 17th 1805, KHS.

[26]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky*, 235

[27]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky* , 235.

congregations connected with the party heartily united, with very few exceptions.'[28] Indeed, support for the work of the schismatic ministers and that of the camp meetings seems to have been nearly universal within the congregations of the Cumberland presbytery. The commission faced almost universal opprobrium from the members of the congregations of the Cumberland presbytery. According to Davidson, the commission faced constant 'ridicule, as well as malice, [that] was brought to bear upon them [the commission], and the respective members were designated by opprobrious nicknames. The whole community was exasperated. There was but a single man in the entire neighborhood, (and he lived three or four miles from the Church,) who was willing to open his house and extend common hospitality to the members.'[29] Yet this schism would not have happened without the support or approval of the congregations involved. The congregations and their laity had an important say in the outcome of the schism just like the congregation of Pisagah had during the Watt hymn controversy. In this case, the congregations in question chose not to follow the wider Synod. The power of congregations was so significant that once they had made that decision there was little that the Synod could do to stop them. The congregation itself was based on a free association and the laity collectively could override even the power of the synod.

Although the Cumberland schism had seen the Presbyterian denomination bitterly divided and torn asunder, there was another issue that had the potential to do even greater damage, not only to the Presbyterian denomination, but to all of Kentucky's denominations. That issue was slavery. The existence of slavery was from the earliest days a contentious issue in Kentucky with supporters found on both sides. Its very nature divided communities. Arguments for and against slavery spanned issues from economics to religion and from communal to societal. Unlike either the Watt's Hymnal controversy or the Cumberland schism, that took place within specific denominations, slavery was one issue that was ultimately universal, affecting every denomination at some level. Slavery was, as stated, a universally contentious issue at every level in Kentucky understanding how local congregations both individual and collectively handled this issue offers a useful insight into both their importance to settlers and their function within Kentucky.

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[28]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky ,* 243.

[29]Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky ,* 235.

Slavery and the Denominations:

Kentucky's parent state, Virginia, had a long history of legalized slavery. As an extension of Virginia, slavery had legal precedent and standing within Kentucky from its first settlement.[30] Indeed slaves and the institution of slavery were present and, part of, the first expedition to settle the territory.[31] William Calk recounted that among Henderson's first expedition into Kentucky there were 'some Neagros [sic]' including at least one slave belonging to Calk himself.[32] William McBride recounted to Lyman Draper the story of one settler Joe Gray who built much of his cabin and outbuildings with the slaves he brought with him.[33] McBride added that Gray defended his holdings by arming his slaves, requiring them to defend his land at all costs. As conditions became more settled in the latter half of the 1780s, an increasing number of wealthy settlers, often from Virginia, such as the Breckinridges or Todds, began to migrate into the territory taking with them their slaves.[34] Such landowners regularly sent slaves ahead of their migration to Kentucky, to clear the land and organize their claims, tasking these individuals to improve the land in order to secure their master's claim and prepare the land for his arrival.[35] For Kentucky during these early years, slavery was a means to

[30]Kentucky's first constitution, ratified in 1792, reaffirmed Kentucky's traditional past in regards to slavery as well as legally established the institution within the state by Article IX. The article importantly even went as far as to placed limitations on the newly formed legislature codifying into law that the legislature 'shale [sic] have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves.' Kentucky Constitution 1792 Article IX ..KHS.

[31]Lacy K Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South, 1787-1840* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29; John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward*, Appalachian Echoes (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 253–54; Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 95–96; Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 39–41; Ivan E. McDougle, 'The Development of Slavery', *The Journal of Negro History* 3, no. 3 (1 July 1918): 214–39, doi:10.2307/2713409; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA., by University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 299,311.

[32]Thursday 6th April 1775, *William Calk Journal: Leaving Virginia to come to Kentucky.* Calk's Family Collection: Series 2 – William Calk, 1758- 1823 Box 7, Folder 96 KHS.

[33]JDS interview with William McBride, ca. 1840's, DM11CC262.

[34]Elizabeth A Perkins and Shane, John Dabney, *Border Life Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 147–48; Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward*, 253–54; Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 39–41; Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers*, 189,122-123; Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 89–92.

[35]Gail S. Terry, *Family Empires: A Frontier Elite in Virginia and Kentucky, 1740-1815* (Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992).

an end.[36] Unlike other slave states, Kentucky lacked any real established cash crop that suited the establishment or need for a slave population. Instead, many of Kentucky's slave owners seemed to have used slaves as tools to improve the land and secure claims before they made their outbound trip. Yet even without the customary cash crop that allowed slavery to exist in other states slavery still persisted for one reason or another throughout Kentucky's earliest days. Slavery though was not a settled issue within Kentucky. Its legality and necessity were an often fought over and debated subject starting with the constitutional conventions called to separate Kentucky from its parent state of Virginia and establish it as a new state in the young republic.

Those conventions saw, significantly, the birth of Kentucky's antislavery movement. Among the list of well-known names at the convention, one name was and has been, frequently overlooked during the discussions on slavery, that of the Rev. David Rice, one of the five members from Mercer County and one of seven ministers elected to the convention. Little is known of how or why Rice was elected to the convention. His own memoirs make only passing remarks that he was a member of the 1792 session of the convention.[37] What is known of his time as a delegate to the convention, suggests that he rarely spoke and had little impact on many of the proposals put forth by the convention. Slavery though was the one issue he took seriously, actively supporting the resolution for its abolition in Kentucky. As an act of protest against the inclusion of Article IX, he would resign his post to the conference shortly before the vote on Article IX was taken. Before resigning though, Rice gave one of the few surviving speeches from the 1792 session.[38] It is little surprise that Rice's speech was given against the proposal of article IX.

Rice's cogent speech later reprinted and entitled *Slavery inconsistent with Justice*, was wide-ranging.[39] The speech argued against the continued existence of slavery in Kentucky, based on grounds from moral to economic arguments and from social to civil. Importantly, his speech to the conference did not lay forth arguments

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[36]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 39.

[37]Bishop, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice*, 68.

[38]David Rice. *A Kentucky Protest Against Slavery: Slavery inconsistent with Justice, Good policy proved by A Speech delivered in the convention, held at Danville, Kentucky. By the Rev. David Rice*. (Samuel Wood, New York 1812), 1.

[39]Rice. *A Kentucky Protest Against Slavery*.

from solely a religious context. Instead, Rice's central theme can be found in one particular line found early on in the speech. 'A slave is a human creature made by law the property of another..., and reduced by mere power to an absolute unconditional subject to his will.'[40] From economic to civil reasons and from judicial to social, Rice argued that slavery was bad specifically for Kentucky and for society in general. It damaged, Rice argued, every aspect of life while adding little to the economic advancement of society. Rice repeated this theme throughout his speech, reiterating it after every argument and tying it back to the universal truth that a slave was a human being reduced to the level of a beast of burden. This was importantly also a moral argument, more typical of those found within the writings and speeches of northern abolitionists and not commonly found within other southern movements.[41] In short, he argued that slavery should be abolished if not for religious and moral reasons then for the safety and advancement of Kentucky's nascent society.

The debate over the formal legalization of slavery in Kentucky came to a head on April 18, 1792, with a vote called for by Taylor and seconded by Smith, in front of the whole of the constitutional assembly.[42] The vote passed along property lines. Those delegates who held more than a thousand acres of land, almost to the man, unanimously voted for the article, with those few with smaller holdings voting against.[43] Though Rice's speech may have had little impact on the final outcome of the vote it was none-the-less important.[44] A study of the minutes of the votes suggest another subtler interpretation, that of the impact of religion on the vote. Of the sixteen men who voted against the inclusion of article nine, six were ministers of their local congregations. Crawford and Swope who were Presbyterians, Kavanaugh, a Methodist, and Bailey, Garrard, and Smith who were Baptists.[45] The other ten men were active lay members of

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[40]Rice. *A Kentucky Protest Against Slavery,* 1.

[41]Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil,* 495–501.

[42]John Mason Brown, *The Political Beginnings of Kentucky: A Narrative of Public Events Bearing ...* (J. P. Morton and Co., 1890),229; Patricia Watlington, *Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792.* ([S.l.]: Univ Of North Carolina Pr, 2012), 220–221;Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers,* 181, 208-209; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44.*

[43]Watlington, *Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics*, 220–221; Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers,* 208-209; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44;* Thomas D Clark , *A history of Kentucky.* (Ashland, KY: J. Stuart Foundation, 1992), 203-204.

[44] Watlington, *Partisan Spirit,* 221; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44.*

[45]Brown, *The Political Beginnings of Kentucky:*,30; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44.*

their own local congregations.[46] Rice's speech placed Kentucky's denominational ministers and elders at the forefront of the antislavery movement in Kentucky.

The denominations were the most effective and logical institutions in Kentucky to found and run abolitionist movements. Kentucky during this period had few civil institutions with which to provide support for the abolitionist movement. In many places, the only institution, civil or ecclesiastical, that existed with any regularity or authority, were the denominations. More importantly for the antislavery movement though, was one of the core messages of any Christian denomination, 'Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.'[47] It was with this commandment in mind, along with David Rice's speech to the convention, that other ministers and some individual congregations took up the task of running and promulgating the abolitionist movement. Among this group Crawford, Swope, Kavanaugh, Bailey, Garrard, and Smith were all members of Kentucky's constitutional convention as well as James Smith, William Hickman, David Barrow, Joshua Carmen, and Carter Tarrant.[48] David Barrow, for example, freed his own slaves, in 1782, on the basis of his reading of Matthew 6:12 and later wrote one of the more important circular letters on the topic.[49] The ministers of Rolling Fork Baptist church, Joshua Carmen and Josiah Dodge, held such antislavery ideals that they were able to persuade their congregation to join and follow them when they left the Salem Association in 1789 over the issue.[50]

Carter Tarrant founded New Hope Congregation as a response to the rise of antislavery ideals within the wider Baptist community.[51] New Hope Congregation was to be a public statement against slavery.[52] Slaves, it should be noted, had been part of Baptist congregations since long before the arrival of the denomination in Kentucky, in

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[46]Brown, *The Political Beginnings of Kentucky*, 228–230; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44.*

[47]Matthew ch 6 versus 12 New American Bible.

[48]Brown, *The Political Beginnings of Kentucky*, 230; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil, 39-44.*

[49]William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, a Collection of Source Material.*, vol. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 79.

[50]Ibid., 1:81.

[51]John Taylor, *Baptists on the American : a history of ten Baptist churches of which the author has been alternately a member*, 79-81. KHS.

[52]John Taylor, *Baptists on the American : a history of ten Baptist churches of which the author has been alternately a member*, 186 KHS.

the mid 1780's. Work by historians such as Kenneth Morgan Sydney Ahlstrom on slaves and Protestant denominations in Virginia and elsewhere has shown that by the start of the American Revolution around a third of all Baptist were of African-American heritage.[53] Within Kentucky those patterns established in Virginia and elsewhere continued. Bryant's Station, for example, 'received into fellowship' a male slave named 'Robin...belonging to Mrs. Chapman' in August of 1786, only four months after its founding.[54] Marble Creek Baptist congregation recorded the acceptance and inclusion into its membership six slaves out of fifty-six members accepted into its community within its first two years (1777-1799).[55] In Marble Creek's instance this equated to one in every nine new members accepted, being a slave. Nor was this ratio uncommon. Of the one hundred and twenty-three individuals who made up the founding members of Mount Pleasant Baptist congregation in 1801, fourteen, a ratio of one in eight, of those individuals were slaves.[56] Indeed Mount Pleasant congregation was fairly typical of Baptist congregations during the later years of nineteenth century coming into being as a branch of a larger Baptist congregation, the South Elkhorn congregation, before breaking away. Nor was the acceptance of slaves into local congregations unique to the Baptists alone. Kentucky's other denominations, from Methodist to Presbyterian, and even the Episcopalian's recorded slaves as part of the community.[57] Such data and reports suggest that slaves had been members of congregations throughout Kentucky from the start. The uniqueness of Tarrant's new congregation was its place as one of the first congregations whose foundation was directed specifically towards emancipation in Kentucky.[58] Other congregations were soon formed by other ministers such as Joshua

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[53]Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (New York University Press, 2000), 83–84; Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* , 190,227,663-665; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 272; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia,*, 166,171-172; Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 26.

[54]Bryant's Station Baptist Church Records, August 19th 1786, KHS.

[55]Marble Creek Church (Baptist), 1787-1842 : [minutes], KHS.

[56]Mt. Pleasant Church Records, 1790-1828, August 4 1801, KHS.

[57]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 659–68; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians*, 100, 120; Tetsuo Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Fronier* (Chicago U.P, n.d.), 180,187-188; Friend, *Along the Maysville Road*, 36–37. Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], UKSC. Transylvania Presbytery Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], UKSC.

[58]Martin , The anti-slavery Movement in Kentucky prior to 1850. Filson Club 1918, 20.

Carmen, with the same intention.[59] Yet, not all congregations followed suit or even agreed with the antislavery agitations and ideals of their ministers. There was, for many, an important and significant difference between a congregation allowing and even accepting slaves as members in good standing and agitation for emancipation. Indeed existing congregations were just as likely to enforce their own collective ideals and values on the subject or hold to societal norms if it suited the wider congregation. As with the events of both the Watt hymnal controversy, or the Cumberland Schism, congregations felt secure enough to take actions, often against their own members or ministers, if individuals went against the majority view of the laity or threatened the community. Two cases in particular from the records of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church are useful examples of one such congregation. The first case involved a slave, Winney, a member in her own right, whilst the second was brought against the congregation's own minister and founder, William Hickman.

On the second Saturday of January 1807, a member of the Forks of Elkhorn congregation brought two complaints against Winney, a slave of another member, and a member herself of the congregation, Esther Boulwares. The first of these was based on Winney believing and publicly stating that it was no longer 'her duty to serve her Master & Mistress' for no 'Christian kept Negroes or Slaves.'[60] The second complaint stemmed from the first. It was recorded that Winney had publicly stated her belief that 'there was thousands of white people in Hell for their treatment to Negroes. And she did not care if there was as many more.' The case was then referred to the following meeting, in February, where once again the court heard the complaint against Winney. On its second airing, the ecclesiastical court expelled Winney for her public statements. It is important to note that Winney was expelled, not for breaking any of the congregational laws that governed the community, for none of her recorded public statements came anywhere near this, but instead she was expelled for breaking civil conventions. Indeed, in doing so, the court made an important statement to both Winney and the rest of the congregation. It seems the court was stating that while Baptist theology suggested that once baptised, all were equal in the sight of God, the reality was rather different. Slaves such as Winney were expected to follow church laws but also were expected to remain

[59]John H. Spencer and Burrilla B. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists : From 1769 to 1885, Including More than 800 Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati : For the author, 1886), 163, 184-187.

[60]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, January 1807, KHS.

obedient to their masters. To do otherwise meant censure and expulsion from one of the few institutions, civil or ecclesiastical, which were as open to African-Americans in Kentucky.[61] Such expulsion was often much more serious for African Americans. For these individuals, there existed no other institution that provided a sense of belonging, community, or equality as the local congregation. Within the walls of a congregation everyone was equal in the eyes of God. To be removed and expelled from that community was to be thrown out of the only place that existed where one could forget they were considered by the outside world as little more than property.

Winney's case was not exceptional. A reading of the minute books from Forks of Elkhorn and other congregations offers up numerous cases of slaves being brought before the congregation accused of crimes that broke either church laws or, like Winney, social conventions. In the years following the legitimisation of slavery within Kentucky, the church courts became another avenue used to reinforce concepts of community within congregations, using censuring or expelling members who might threaten the unity of the wider community. While ministers were the de-facto leaders of the antislavery movement in the state, their very own governance systems both at the congregational and at regional and national levels often took steps to limit the impact such an issue could have on the unity of the larger community.

The second case brought forth to the Forks of Elkhorn Church Court involved its founding and long-time minister the Rev. William Hickman. Hickman's case followed similar patterns to both the case against Winney, as it dealt with the issue of slavery yet it was also heavily reminiscent of both the Watt hymn controversy and the Cumberland Schism within the Presbyterian denomination. As in those two events the congregation at the center of the events felt secure enough to take actions against their own minister and importantly founder when he went against the majority view of the laity.

William Hickman's antislavery stance grew out of his own childhood. Hickman recorded in his *Short Account* of his life that he was born in Virginia in 1747, and later orphaned at a young age resulting in him and his younger sister spending much of their childhood being fostered by a local family.[62] He would stay with this family until he was fourteen when he 'was put out to trade' some twenty miles away, and indeed in

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[61]Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 272.

[62]William Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life and Travels: For More than Fifty Years; A Professed Servant of Jesus Christ*, KHS.

those days a world away, from all that he knew.[63] Hickman described those he lived and apprenticed with as being corrupted, 'ha[ving] not lived long at my new habitation before I fell in with evil habits, for master, mistress, children, apprentices and negroes [sic] were all alike in their wickedness.'[64] It was this period of his life that would shape his understanding and later define his strong opposition to the institution of slavery. His account goes on to state that it would take some seven years before he again found his faith. While the rest of his account makes little direct mention of slavery, there can be little doubt that it was during this period of his life that he came to see the corrupting nature slavery had. Hickman argued that from master down through the household to the slaves and apprentices 'wickedness' and 'evil habits' prevailed. Indeed, there are no other mentions of Hickman's interaction with slaves found in the rest of his account. His need to include this experience suggests that it had a strong influence upon the rest of his life. This is borne out when one looks at the rest of his life, and specifically his time as a minister in Kentucky. Hickman would move to Kentucky with his family in the closing years of the 1780's. Once in the west he quickly set to work, taking up the pastorate of several churches in the region, finally settling in 1788 and becoming the founding minister of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church.[65] He would spend much of his ministry agitating for the emancipation of slaves and the end of slavery in Kentucky.

It seems though that few in the congregation agreed with Hickman's stance or actions and by 1806 it had had enough of Hickman and his antislavery activities. Charges were brought forth in the December sitting of the congregation that year, and only a month before Winney's case. The charge against Hickman was for inviting his friend the Rev. Carter Tarrant to preach at his house after Tarrant had been expelled and excommunicated from his own congregation over his antislavery activities. At the time of the charges the congregation as a whole would have known the reason for Tarrant’s expulsion and excommunication. Neither Hickman nor Tarrant were shy about their antislavery activities or views. Baptist congregations, even those of different associations, kept in regular contact with one another, especially when the communication involved church elders or ministers. Before the court were two

[63]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life,* KHS.

[64]Hickman, *A Short Account of My Life*, KHS.

[65]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, January 1800, KHS.

questions. First, was 'it right to Invite [sic] an Excommunicated Minister to preach?'[66] Secondly, the court asked did Hickman 'Err [sic] by doing so?'[67] The congregation found by a three-fourths majority that it was indeed improper for an excommunicated preacher to have preached either publicly or privately in a congregant's home, even if that member was the minister himself. In the charge directed at Hickman, though he was importantly found not to have erred in doing so. There can be little doubt though that Hickman was being warned and censured over his antislavery ideals. The fact that Hickman was found by the court not to have erred suggests that they were cautioning Hickman not to bring the community into dispute over the issue. Enough members felt that his actions and his place within that community could cause the community to break into opposing camps over it.

Yet just a few months later, by September of 1807, the congregation forced him out of both the congregation that he had founded and the wider Baptist Association. The congregation recorded of the event that Hickman 'came forward and informed the church that he was distressed on the account of the practice of Slavery [sic] as being tolerated by [its] members' and could no longer be part of any church or institution that so readily accepted the institution.[68] The congregation's minutes also record that he did not leave alone. At least one other member, Bro. Plewright Sisk also left the church 'for similar reasons [as]... Hickman.'[69]

Hickman's exile, though, from both the congregation he founded and the association, would be short lived. Hickman returned to Elkhorn in October 1809 'after some conversation' with the church's elders.[70] The records from the period would seem to suggest that the congregation and Hickman came either to some agreement on slavery or at least to an uneasy peace. Neither Hickman's own accounts nor the congregation's records offer any insight into what was discussed, yet discussions of slavery or the congregation's stance towards the subject is not broached by either party for the rest of Hickman's tenure with Forks of Elkhorn. In either case, while neither Hickman nor the

[66]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, January 1807, KHS.

[67]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, January 1807, KHS.

[68]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, September 1807, KHS.

[69]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, September 1807, KHS.

[70]The Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Transcripts 1789-1805, October 1809, KHS.

congregation changed their respective stances on the question of slavery, Hickman was allowed to continue with his antislavery agenda as long as he remained publicly quiet and did not bring the congregation's community into dispute. In short the records suggest that the congregation silenced Hickman's public activities on the issue and had both the power and authority to do so.

Forks of Elkhorn was not an exception either. Hickman's close friend Carter Tarrant's relationship with his first congregation of Hillsborough as its minister followed much the same path and offers another useful example. Few records or accounts survive from Tarrant's early life and Tarrant himself adds only a few passing remarks about his life in his own works.[71] What is known is that, like Hickman, Tarrant was a native of Virginia and a sanctioned minister in his own right before he moved to Kentucky. Born in November 1765, Tarrant became minister of his first church, Upper Banister Church, when he was about twenty-three.[72] He would leave this post a few years later moving to Kentucky shortly after the Revolutionary War.

None of the surviving accounts define a moment like Hickman's placement as an apprentice, which fundamentally shaped Tarrant's antislavery ideology. What is apparent though is that his ideology was fully developed by the time he moved to Kentucky. What is also apparent is that Tarrant lived his antislavery and emancipatory stance much more fully than Hickman. Yet, like Forks of Elkhorn, the congregation of Hillsborough soon grew tired of Tarrant's stance and felt secure enough to remove him from its pulpit. Congregation records show that by 1806 Tarrant would be both excluded and later excommunicated from the congregation at Hillsborough for his antislavery activities.[73] Shortly after that, he joined up with another emancipation-driven minister, the Rev. John Sutton, and formed one of Kentucky's first emancipation Baptist churches, New Hope.[74] Tarrant's antislavery activities would ultimately lead to him becoming, in the words of one nineteenth century biographer, 'much reduced in his worldly circumstances' forcing him to accept a position as an Army Chaplin in the War

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[71]Carter Tarrant, *History of the Baptised Ministers and Churches in Kentucky, &c Friends to Humanity*. (William Hunter, Frankfort Ky 1808) 10-13.

[72]Tarrant, *History of the Baptised Ministers and Churches in Kentucky,* 11; J.H. Spencer. *A History of Kentucky Baptists: From 1769-1889,* 189.

[73]Sweet, Religion *on the American Frontier: The Baptist 1783-1830,* 328.

[74]Spencer. *A History of Kentucky Baptists: From 1769-1889,* 189.

of 1812. [75] He would die during the war at the Battle of New Orleans.

Similar patterns are found in many of the other denominations within Kentucky. Craig Thompson Friend for example illustrates the case of John Moore, a Presbyterian. Charges were brought against Moore for 'exposing to sale by public Auction' one of his slaves.[76] After hearing the case and the charges against Moore, his local congregation expelled him. If the case had ended there it could be read as one of the Presbyterian denomination taking a strong stance against slavery, and attempting to end the institution through the transformation of its congregation's morals and understanding of the perceived evils of the institution. Yet the case against Moore did not end with the decision of the local court but was brought before the Synod of Kentucky.

The Synod, after hearing the case, once more ruled that the local 'parish' court had overstepped its bounds. The Synod reinstated Moore to full status within the congregation. In short, overturning the original decision and the censure against slavery that it implied. In passing this decision, the Synod was making a very explicit statement to both the local congregation and the wider body of Presbyterians in Kentucky. Individual members could hold antislavery ideas, they could even act upon them; ministers, such as Rice, could vocally condemn slavery in their sermons with few worries; ecclesiastical courts though, could not expel or prosecute charges against members for doing something civil laws deemed legal and the Constitution of 1792 made slavery legal within Kentucky, with the 1799 Constitution reaffirming this.[77] The synod argued it was not the place of the local congregation, Presbytery, or Synod to state otherwise, or indeed to act as if slavery was not legal. The lower Presbyteries would quickly confirm the Synod's decision at the local level. The Transylvania Presbytery would be one of the clearest in its support of the Synod stating: 'yet they [the presbytery] view the final remedy as alone belonging to the civil powers; and also do not think that they have sufficient authority from the word of God to make it a term of church communion.'[78] The decision left the Presbyterian denomination within Kentucky with a perplexing conundrum. Local ministers could act in the role as leaders of the antislavery movement, the laity could agitate for the ending of slavery within Kentucky,

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[75]Spencer. *A History of Kentucky Baptists: From 1769-1889,* 189.

[76]Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* , 237.

[77]A Constitution or Form of Government for the State of Kentucky, April 19 1792, KHS; The Constitution or Form of Government of the State of Kentucky, 1799, KHS.

[78]Transylvania Presbyter Minutes 1786-1860 [microfilm], April 1796, UKSC.

yet, when it came to ecclesiastical law the Presbyterians could not act as if slavery did not exist. Slave holding members were welcome and could continue to be members in full standing with and alongside their antislavery brethren. In other words, the Synod let Kentucky Presbyterians issue a statement of moral outrage against the institution of slavery while preventing its members from collectively acting against it. It would be nearly 20 years, 1818, before the wider General Conference passed resolutions against slavery.[79]

At its yearly General Conference in 1796, the Methodist denomination also took up the question of slavery posing an important question to its delegates on the question. Few would have been surprised if this young and fiery denomination, just recently broken away from its parent denomination the Church of England, would have been anything but an ardent supporter of emancipation and antislavery movements stirring throughout the young republic at the time. Indeed, it was well documented that both the Wesley brothers and Francis Asbury, soon to become the denomination's first bishop, were strong in their convictions of the evils of slavery. As early as 1780, at the denomination's General Conference, slavery was condemned as 'contrary to the law of God, man, nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience, and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others would do unto us and ours.'[80] By the time of the conference in 1794 Asbury had convinced many of his fellow ministers to end slavery as soon as possible. Writing of the conference, Asbury stated 'We opened our conference, and had great siftings and searchings, especially on the subject of slavery. The preachers almost unanimously entered into an agreement and resolution not to hold slaves in any state where the law will allow them to manumit them, on pain of forfeiture of their honour and their place in the itinerant connection.'[81]

By the start of the 1796 conference, many Methodist ministers had high hopes that the question of slavery had been answered. The conference declared that it was 'more than convinced of the great evil of...slavery which still existed...and do most earnestly recommend to the yearly conferences, quarterly meetings and... [others] to be exceedingly cautious what persons they admit.'[82] This was one of the strongest

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[79]Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier (Vol. II) The Presbyterians*, 112.

[80]*Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Vol 1 1796- 1836. Published by the order of the Conference.* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), 1780.

[81]Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury*,208-209.

[82]*Journal of the General Conference of the M.E. Church 1796-1836 vol 1*, 22.

condemnations of slavery put forth by any denomination in the early republic. The conference as a whole, North and South, slave state and free state, seemed to be in agreement over the immorality of the institution. Yet the conference did not stop with these words. If it had, the Methodist Episcopal Church would have become the largest denomination in America to fully and completely denounce slavery. The debate, however, continued and quickly turned this condemnation of slavery on its head. First of all, the conference clarified its stance by stating that all those who joined the denomination were required to follow local laws regarding emancipation. Local views and laws, not the decisions of the national conference, would decide the fate of slavery. All new slaveholding members were to be fully received until their minister or class leader had 'spoken to him freely and faithfully on the subject of slavery.'[83] In other words the 1796 conference, while declaring a moral outrage for slavery, placed the decision of how to answer the question of slavery on the individual and at most, at the level of his or her Class meeting. In doing so the denomination was demonstrating where the power within the denomination was often placed, at the local level. The Methodist denomination by doing so was following similar patterns found in other denominations, and in particular those denominations on the frontier and in America's backcountry. The denomination was with its statement trying to end slavery yet it was well aware that it needed to accommodate local traditions and stances on issues such as slavery if it was going to grow.

The local congregation occupied a unique place within Kentucky during its earliest days of settlement. Many settlers perceived each denomination as agents of community. This was as a result of denominations more often than not being the first institution, civil or ecclesiastical, to bring the collection of individuals, families, and strangers that constituted Kentucky's population, together in any form of community. The actions of congregations such as Pisgah, New Hope, Rolling Forks, Forks of Elkhorn, and Hillsborough demonstrate how significant and important the denomination had become for many settlers in only a handful of years. The denominations were able to overcome problems, schisms, and controversies that should have damaged their ability to operate effectively within Kentucky. Their existence and survival, it must be remembered, was dependent directly on the support of the laity and that support was by necessity voluntary. No legislation existed at any level within Kentucky that required

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[83] *Journal of the General Conference of the M.E. Church 1796-1836 vol 1 ,* 23.

settlers to support the denominations in any way. The voluntary nature of the denominations allowed the local congregations to become representative of local values and stances on specific issues. As such, congregations often felt empowered to choose their own ministers or to remove said ministers who may have threatened the stability and unity of the congregation. The larger ecclesiastical organizations such as presbyteries, synods, general conferences, and associations, on the other hand, were by necessity more inclusive, encompassing the wider range of regional stances and values held by the different and competing groups. This structure allowed denominations to be open to everyone, slaves, merchants, poor and rich, antislavery leaders and slave owners. The denominations welcomed everyone and none were barred from communion. When challenges arose that threatened that community, whether at the congregational or wider level, the denominations had a variety of tools at their disposal to reinforce and strengthen their congregational communities.

Ecclesiastical courts and tribunals were, for example, one way to reinforce community. Time and again cases against slaves and those strongly driven towards antislavery activities were brought forth. In many cases, the congregations ruled in favour of society's *status quo* forcing individuals to conform through censure and expulsion. Whilst expulsion may seem at first glance antithetical towards the idea of the denominations as binding individuals into community, it was not. In many cases, the congregations were the only social structure to exist that provided any sense of community. To be forced to live outside that community was to be forced to live outside society. In the end this was the power and indeed the importance of the local congregation. A majority of settlers conformed their ideas, at least publicly, to the congregation's norms in order to 're-enter' and remain within their local community.

To lose that community would have been a step too far for all but the most hardened backcountry explorer. For many settlers their local congregation and its wider denomination was often the only community that they had access to and they fought hard to keep it functioning. On the surface such institutions may seem to be fragile especially given their nature as free associations and importantly lacking the force of law to compel support. It was for these reasons that local congregations were able to overcome such challenges as the Watt's Hymnal controversy or the Cumberland Schism with little harm to either their authority or perceived importance to settler. By overcoming such challenges to their authority the denominations were able to foster the sense of community that settlers sought and in doing so they brought order and stability

to Kentucky and its backcountry in a way that no other institution civil or ecclesial could have.

Conclusion

The Reverenced David Rice described many of Kentucky's first settlers as being 'grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion.'[1] Yet within a generation the territory had, in the words of one traveller, fast become a place were 'religion ha[d] obtained the preeminent [sic] influence. That is those that have it shows it, and those that have it not wish it to be considered religious for the credit it gives in society.'[2] That transformation from the 'grossly ignorant' to 'preeminence' continued on an upward trajectory well into the nineteenth century resulting in, by one early historian's estimates, the establishment of one congregation for every 532 people by 1850.[3] Such dramatic and continued growth is a testament to the importance the denominations played in the development and transformation of early Kentucky.

This thesis is a study of that transformation. By studying Kentucky's denominations during this period this thesis offers a possible model for how that transition occurred. Through this study Kentucky becomes an important model for future studies of other territories that opened up during the Nineteenth Century, offering one pattern on which other territories may have been based.

Early settlers, it must be remembered, often chose to spread out over the newly opened territory preferring to live within small family groups close to their holdings over more secure and traditional towns or villages that had developed back east. Beyond the walls of these family cabins existed little else. No other institution was as open to settlers regardless of class, gender, age, or even legal status as the local congregation. The slave was as welcome as the poor farmer or the rich merchant. Each was part of an institution that was open and welcoming to all. The denominations offered stability and a sense of community that no other institution, civil or otherwise, could or were able to provide.

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[1]Robert Hamilton Bishop and David Rice, *An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, during a Period of Forty Years: Containing the Memoirs of Rev. David Rice, and Sketches of the Origin and Present State of Particular Churches, and of the Lives and Labours of a Number of Men Who Were Eminent and Useful in Their Day* (T. T. Skillman, 1824), 68.

[2]Arthur Campbell to Rev., Charles Cummings, 25 December 1802, *King Mountain Papers,* Draper Collection DM9DD76.

[3]Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky : History of Kentucky*, vol. 1 (Covington, Ky. : Collins & Co., 1874), 432.

This argument of the importance that denominations played within society has often been overlooked by studies of both the backcountry and of denominations. Historians of the backcountry such as Craig Thompson Friend or Stephen Aron often place very little emphasis on the role denominations played in the development of western society, whilst individuals such as Ellen Eslinger, Paul Conkin, or John Boles, whose works are focused on the denominations, often miss the important role those denominations had within the wider society.[4]

This thesis has tried to offer a starting point in order to fill this gap within the historiography of the backcountry. In order to do so, this thesis has focused its study on three specific areas in which the denominations were able to successfully build community. These three areas are firstly the development of camp meetings, secondly the local congregation and its' various institutions, and finally the establishment of the physical church. Individually, each of these areas had a significant impact on the development of Kentucky. Collectively they became the agents of change that offered the denominations a chance to bring order and stability to Kentucky.

The study of camp meetings was the starting point of this thesis. Camp meetings, especially within the historiography of Kentucky have of course been the focus of frequent study. In particular, such studies have often placed their focus within the context of backcountry and the periodic Great Awakenings that occurred. Ellen Eslinger, Paul Conkin, and John Boles have all contributed to the understanding of camp meetings.[5] Each of these works, and many others that have followed, have examined the religious dimensions of camp meetings and their importance as the starting point of the Second Great Awakening. Yet these works have often ignored the importance camp meetings had on the development of wider Kentucky. Importantly the historiography of camp meetings

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[4]Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 114; Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 170-192;Ellen Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Paul Keith Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); John B Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

[5]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*; Conkin, *Cane Ridge, America's Pentecost*; Boles, *Religion in Antebellum Kentucky*.

has often missed how camp meetings operated as a way to reach out to those individuals who would not otherwise have entered within reach of the various denominations. While focusing on camp meetings as a religious experience such historians have either ignored or underplayed how such events were also communal event for many settlers. By focusing on the communal aspects, along with the religious, this thesis has demonstrated how camp meetings began the process of the creation of community. Within these meetings developed a new form of worship that was more inclusive and more communal. These meetings allowed for wider participation especially by women, children, or slaves who were ordinarily relegated to positions of silent participants within normal religious services. Camp meetings developed a system that established a sense of community and belonging that no other institution was able to meet so fully.[6] The regularity and size of these meetings was key to this. Meetings, it must be remembered, occurred on nearly a monthly basis between the spring and autumn months and quickly became for settlers important social and communal events because of that regularity. That regularity allowed camp meetings to begin a process of binding disparate individuals together by engaging settlers where they were. This process was done by actively placing these meetings outside the bounds of the local congregation and church and into the backcountry. Bringing outsiders, in many cases for the first time, into direct contact with the denominations and in the process transcending existing denominational bonds.

From the starting point of camp meetings, this thesis turned its attention towards the ideas and concepts of the local congregation. The local congregation was ideally situated to reinforce the beginnings of community created at the camp meetings. It was there at the local congregational level that settlers entered into a deeper connection with the denominations. For many settlers the reason was simple, the local congregation was often the most visible symbol of community and society for miles around. That community was offered firstly through membership into the congregation. Membership granted access to an institution that was importantly both communal and local was deemed important to settlers. It was through membership that settlers gained entry into a stable community and access to all the community and the wider denomination could offer. Membership was importantly an active process, unlike previous generations, for

[6]Eslinger, *Citizens of Zion*, 214.

both the settler and the denomination. It required the individual seeking entrance to make an active choice and often involved not just the individual but also the entire congregation, reinforcing ideas of community in the process.

Camp meetings and the local congregation became avenues for settlers to find that needed community. Each in its own way reinforced ideas of community. Camp meetings did this by engaging settlers outside normal Sabbath services while also establishing a new form of worship that was more inclusive. The local congregation offered access to an institution that was both communal and local. In creating community, the denominations also offered something that was just as important to those in the backcountry, stability.

Kentucky saw its population increase dramatically throughout the first few decades of settlement. By 1800, the population had grown to 220,955 doubling a decade later to 406,511. Such increase within a generation resulted in a constant state of flux as new individuals and families moved westward. The denominations offered stability along with a sense of order for settlers. That sense of stability was found in the building of physical churches. The building of a church was no easy task, requiring significant commitments by the congregation in both financial terms and in time requirements. The benefits though were significant for those congregations that had access to a church. The church expressed important ideas of both community and stability to settlers. Over time those congregations that had access to a church often found stability in both congregational numbers and leadership. These ideas were reinforced in the layout of churches strengthening the already established and shared ideas of community within their congregations.

The end result of the work of the denominations from the creation of church buildings, the development of camp meetings and of church institutions, was to turn the denominations into important agents of order in the backcountry. That order began with the local congregation for many settlers. It was there at the level of the local congregation that many settlers often first engaged with concepts and ideas of the democratic process. Through activities such as calling of ministers as well as the election of elders, deacons, and other lay positions in their local congregation, settlers became active members of the local congregation. Ideas of order and democracy did not end there, with settlers often playing a key role in the creation of congregation rules and the debates that ensued.

The order and stability the denominations brought led to many viewing the denominations as deeply trusted institutions. Their authority, whether real or perceived by settlers, derived from their ability to fulfil a needed connection by settlers to the greater society. That order and stability from the denominations though was fragile. Much of their work was based firmly on the concept that membership to and within a specific congregation was voluntary. Disagreements from the personal and theological, to social and cultural, could have easily damaged the progress denominations made throughout the period.

By understanding how denominations became creators of community within Kentucky one can begin to understand how the process of western expansion was able to succeed. Federal and regional governments may have created laws that established newly opened territories, but it was often the denominations that played an important role in the creation of that community and stability of the wider societies. This is an important aspect of backcountry studies that has often been overlooked. The historiography of the backcountry is often written in two parts. The first examines the very beginnings of backcountry territories, often examining the reasons why a new frontier was open and why the founding fathers of the territory ventured forth in the first place. The second part of such historiography examines the region often after the new communities have formed and society has already been established. The problem with this approach is that it often ignores how those societies came into being and how they were initially formed. This study of Kentucky's denominations during this period offers a possible model for how that transition occurred. Ultimately any study on backcountry development must now include a consideration of the denominations that were present. No longer can they be ignored or deemed irrelevant to the wider discussion. Indeed, even studies that try to examine the denominations as something separate, as in the case of those on the revivals of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries now must examine how these events played out in a wider context. The denominations were as much part of the story and history of the backcountry as the individuals who populated it.

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Appendix

Camp meetings Held in Kentucky Table.

	Date of Camp Meeting:	Number of Days:	Ministers Present:	Denominations Present:	Attendance:	Conversion Numbers:
1	May 1797		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		10 individuals
2	July 1797		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	Much of the Congregation	
3	September 1798		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	Much of the Congregation	
4	July 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
5	August 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	All of the Congregation	
6	September 1799		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
7	June 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	The multitudes	
8	July 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	From as far away as 100 miles	
9	--- 1800			Presbyterian		
10	--- 1800			Presbyterian		
11	--- 1800		William McKendree	Methodist's		
12	August 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		50 Individuals
13	September 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		45 Individuals
14	September 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 70 people	
15	October 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 40 people	
16	October 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		8 Individuals

17	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		12 Individuals
18	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	40 individuals	
19	November 1800		James McGreedy	Presbyterian	About 20 people	
20	April 1801		James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
21	May 1801	4 days and 3 nights	James McNemar		Cabin Creek, Cane Ridge, Concord, Eagle Creek	20 Individuals
22	May/June 1801	5 days and 4 nights	James McNemar	Presbyterian	4,000 people	
23	June 1801	4 days and 3 nights	7 Minister's	Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist	A small number	
24	June/July 1801			Presbyterian		
25	July 1801	5 days and nights	James McGreedy	Presbyterian		
26	August 1801	About one week	Stone, McNemar, McGreedy, Crawford	Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist	Between 10,000 and 20,000 people	

Source: James McGready, *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M'Gready* (Nashville, Tenn. : Printed and Published at J. Smith's Steam Press, 1837), vii-xi; Richard McNemar, Shakers and Springfield (Ohio) presbytery, *The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary out-Pouring of the Spirit of God* (Lexington, KY: Michael D. Fortner, 2012), x-xi; Collins and Collins, *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky* : vol. 1, 434; Methodist Magazine, 1821, p. 189; Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States: From the First Settlement Down to the Present Time* (Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 369.

Elkhorn Baptist Association Records: Boones Creek Baptist Congregation.

Year:	Baptized:	Received:	Dismissed:	Excommunicated	Dead:	Total:
1788	2	2	-	1	-	37
1789	-	-	4	-	-	51
October 1789	4	9	2	-	1	61
1790	4	1	4	-	-	64
1791	20	5	3	-	2	74
1792	7	2	2	-	1	79
1793	-	1	7	1	1	66
October 1793	-	-	1	-	-	66
1794	-	-	-	-	-	66
1795	-	-	-	-	-	-
1796	-	-	7	9	1	43
1797	-	3	1	2	-	48
1798	-	-	-	-	-	40
1799	1	8	-	-	-	39
1800	-	3	2	-	-	39
Total:	38	33	33	13	6	
Per Year:	2.9	2.538	2.538	1	0.4651	

Source: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1788 – 1792, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

Elkhorn Baptist Association Records: Bryant's Station Baptist Congregation.

Year:	Baptized:	Received:	Dismissed:	Excommunicated	Dead:	Total:
1788	8	14	-	-	1	97
1789	12	14	1	5	1	192
1790	12	19	-	2	-	161
August 1790	20	24	2	2	1	200
1791	21	26	5	3	4	233
1792	35	6	8	4	2	254
1793	6	9	35	4	1	228
October 1793	1	5	6	3	1	223
1794	-	6	2	1	5	219
1795	1	17	32	2	2	200
1796	-	19	20	3	4	194
1797	10	7	16	3	2	185
1798	8	14	13	2	4	188
1799	4	1	10	2	-	173
1800	1	5	12	2	-	170
Total:	139	168	162	38	28	
Per Year:	10.69	12.9	12.46	2.92	2.15	

Soure: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, October 1793 - August 1795, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

Elkhorn Baptist Association Records: Tates Creek Baptist Congregation.

Year:	Baptized:	Received:	Dismissed:	Excommunicated	Dead:	Total:
1788	1	-	-	-	-	16
1789	-	-	-	3	1	15
October 1789	4	4	-	-	-	27
1790	6	9	2	-	1	39
1791	28	11	9	4	1	60
1792	-	8	7	2	-	63
1793*	-	-	1	-	-	62
October 1793	-	-	-	-	-	62
1794	-	-	-	-	-	62
1795	-	-	6	-	3	46
1796	-	2	4	-	-	40
1797	-	-	-	-	-	37
1798	-	-	-	-	-	35
1799	-	-	-	-	-	30
1800	-	-	-	-	-	29
Total:	39	34	29	9	6	
Per Year:	2.052	2.615	2.23	0.6923	0.461	

* First recorded mention of a physical church building

Source: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 31st May 1788, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections

Elkhorn Baptist Association Records: Bryant's Station Ministers List.

Year:	Ministers/Messenger:	Congregation Size:
1788	Dudly/Walker/Mason	97
May 1789	Dudly/Roach/Mason/Young	129
October 1789	Dudly/Mason/Ellis/Young	161
1790	Dudly/Roach/Ellis/Mason	200
1791	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Monroe	233
1792	Dudly/Walker/Monroe/Mason	254
1793	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	228
October 1793	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	223
1794	Walker/Monroe/Young/Mason	219
1795	Walker/Mason/Young	200
1796	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Collins	194
1797	Dudly/Walker/Mason/Collins	185
1798	Dudly/Collins/Richardson/Mason	188

Source: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1788 - 1798, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections.

Elkhorn Baptist Association Meetings: Ministers Present.

Year:	Bryant's Station:	Tates Creek:	Boone's Creek:
1785	-	Tanner, Jones, Williams	-
1786	Dudley, Eastin	Tanner, Williams	Shortage, Fryer
1787	Dudley, Roach, Waller	Williams, Turpin	Shortage, Winn, Whorley
1788	Dudley, Waller, Mason	Jones, Turpin	Tompson, Shortage, Winn, Whaley
1788	Dudley, Roach, Mason	Clarke, Crooke	Shortage, G. Winn, O. Winn, Whaley
1789	Dudley, Roach, Mason, Young	Jones, Clerk	Thompson, G. Winn, Chambers
1789	Dudley, Mason, Ellis, Young	Van Teage, Dosher	G. Winn, Chambers, Sperr
1790	Dudley, Roach, Ellis, Mason	Tomson, Wilcoxson	G. Winn, O. Winn, Chambers, Whaley
1791	Dudley, Wallar, Mason, Monroe	Thompson, Jones, Morre, McGree	G.Winn, Chambers, Hazlerig, Hardage
1791	Dudley, Monroe, Waller, Mayson	Thompson, More, James	-
1792	Dudley, Waller, Monroe, Mason	Moore, Jones, Magee	G. Winn, O. Winn, Moony, Whaley
1793	Dudley, Waller, Monroe,Young	Thompson, Jones, Wilkinson	G. Winn, O. Winn, Hazlerig, Bradly
1793	Waller, Monroe, Young, Mason	-	Whaley, Money
1794	Dudley, Waller, Mason, Young	Thompson, McGee, Jones	-
1795	Waller, Mason, Young	Wilson, Williams	-
1796	Dudley, Waller, Mason, Collins	Moore, Williams	G. Winn, O. Winn, Hazlerig
1797	Dudley, Waller, Mason, Collins	Moore, MaGee	Bradly, Haselrig, Talbot
1798	Dudley, Collins, Richardson, Mason	Moor, Watts	Habbirt, Nallingham
1799	Dudley, Collins, Young, Mason	Moor, Watts	G. Winn, O. Winn, Bradley
1800	Dudley, Collins, Young, Dale	Moor, Watts	Dolin, Bradley

Source: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1788 - 1798, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections

Elkhorn Baptist Association Data:

Year:	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798
Number of congregations:	11	13	14	13	25	24	26	29	31	27	33
Association size:	559	1000	1365	1299	1740	1847	1904	1948	1934	2335	2376
Average:	50.82	76.92	97.5	99.9	69.6	76.9	73.23	67.2	62.38	86.4	72

Source: Minutes of the Elkhorn Association Records, 1788 - 1798, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Special Collections

Episcopalian Society/ Christ Church Congregation Membership List.

	Episcopalian Society 1808:	Christ Church 1809:
	Name:	**Name:**
1	Henry King	William Ridgely
2	Andrew McCall	J. W. Wyatt
3	Matthew Elder	Rob Todd
4	William Essex	Walter Warfield

5	David Sheley	William Morton
6	Rob Holmes	Alex Parker
7	Thomas Hart	Willam Macbean
8	William Macbean	P.W. Bicks
9	P.T. Roberts	John W H
10	John Bradford	John Bradford
11	William Morton	Thomas Church
12	Rob Todd	David sheley
13	Ch Wilkins	Henry Kelly
14	Fredk Rideley	William Essex
15	John W Hunt	John Posltethwait
16	Alex Parker	John Johnson
17	Walter Warfield	Henry King
18	Henry Kelly	John Hart
19	James Moore	John Jordan
20	John Posltethwait	Rev. Moore
21	Henry Clay	Henry Clay
22	Matthias Shyrock	P. Roberts
23	John Wyatt	Rob Holmes
24	Thomas Church	William McGowen
25	G.A. Weaber	Matthias Shyrock
26	Henry Purviance	
27	John Jordan	

Source: Christ Church Episcopal Records, Lexington, KY, August 25th 1808 – February 24th 1878,[microfilm], *A*ugust 25th 1808, University of Kentucky Special Collection, Lexington Kentucky.